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Why FM Radio Sucks

The Washington Monthly

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GOD'S FOREIGN POLICY

The biggest threat to Bush's war strategy isn't coming from Muslims, but from Christians

by Joshua Green

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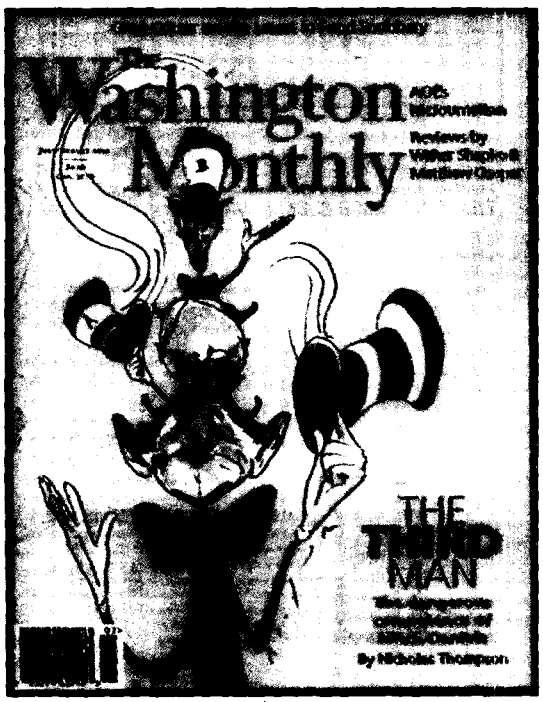

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Letters

New Bucks

While I'm tentatively partial to Stephanie Mencimer's discarded "pat male-fantasy" theory ("Violent Femmes," September 2001), I flat-out disagree with her contention that "studs on steroids" are passé. We need only turn to a slightly different medium and observe the gape-mouthed 18-35 demographic permanently tuned into "Smackdown," "Raw is War," "Monday Nitro," and the rest of the professional wrestling genre on network and cable television seven nights a week. These muscle-fests feature oversized brutes accompanied by their busty, buff, and scantily-clad sidekicks, allowing viewers to have their (beef/cheese) cake and eat it too. And the growing number of Vince McMahon's minions' cinematic appearances bodes poorly for Ms. Mencimer's argument. The newest generation of moviegoers has been raised on this tripe, and we underestimate its effect on our cultural perception of gender at our folly.

DAVE SLOAN
Washington, D.C.

Transfer Credits

Thad Hall's article faulting George W. Bush's education plan for not excluding mobile students from the scoring system was a curiously timid step in the right direction ("Student Movement," September 2001). Certainly teachers and principals should not be held accountable for the test performance of students who arrived in their schools only a few days, or weeks, before the tests. The principals and teachers in such disadvantaged schools should also not be judged by comparing their test scores with those of other schools. Instead, they should be judged on how well each of their students has progressed during the school year—that is, to what extent did each student advance from start to finish of the year.

Surely a teacher who advances a classroom of disadvantaged kids by more than one grade level in a year is doing well, even if the class ends the year somewhat below its suburban siblings in end-of-year scores. A principal who runs a school that does this year after year in most classes should be recognized as a hero, even if the 12th-grade scores are only "average" for the city, county, or state. Such "longitudinal tracking" of the progress of individual students should proceed, not just during each school year, but from year to year and from school to school. If such longitudinal tracking were to become common practice, we might have a better chance of not leaving as many children behind.

GENE PORTER
Nashua, N.H.

Hard Bargain

"Withering Rights" (September 2001), by Julie Wakefield, accurately observes that a patients' bill of rights will be of little value because the right to sue is subject to waiver and replacement by arbitration—even if the arbitration provision is in small print and not negotiable. But Wakefield errs in stating that unions "mostly keep mandatory arbitration clauses out" of contracts. Rather, virtually every collective bargaining agreement in the United States over the last 50 years has provided for final and binding arbitration of worker grievances. Indeed, the inclusion of such grievance arbitration provisions was a key goal and a major triumph for organized labor.

The experience of organized labor with arbitration does not provide a perfect analogy to the likely experience of patients, consumers and individual workers, but it does merit serious consideration. Quite apart from the quality of decisions and their fairness, labor arbitration is low-cost—and frequently does not involve attorneys as either representatives of the parties or as arbitrators.

STEPHEN K. HUBER
Houston, Texas

Life Logic

How did a review as full of illogic and irrelevance as Gregg Easterbrook's ("We're All Darwinians Now," September 2001) slip past your editorial vigilance? Easterbrook argued that religion and evolution are coming to a *modus vivendi* as scientists realize that some questions haven't yet been explained in Darwinian terms.

Easterbrook assumes that the longer some phenomenon remains unexplained by science, the higher the probability that it will never be explained. This is simply fallacious. The continued absence of a phenomenon establishes nothing about the probability of its eventual existence.

Logical errors aside, however, the question Easterbrook spends so much time pondering doesn't need an entire article to answer, much less an entire book by a professor of philosophy. It can be answered in a few sentences. Of course a Darwinian can be a Christian, since there is nothing in the Christian faith that demands a belief in the "intelligent design" of life forms. Easterbrook says it himself: "[W]hy shouldn't God employ compounds with natural properties?" Why indeed? Why shouldn't God go further, and limit Her effort of creation to the instant of the Big Bang, thereafter leaving the universe free to follow its natural, not supernatural, course? In this case, there is no conflict between Darwin and Christianity, unless all Christians are required to accept every word of the Bible as the literal truth. I doubt that Easterbrook would go that far.

DAVID J. ZIMNY
Oakland, Calif.

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Mr. Zimny employs the common cheap-shot technique of attributing to me something I did not say, then objecting to his own invention. My review never says that "the longer some phenomenon remains unexplained by science, the higher the probability that it will never be explained" or expresses any similar sentiment. Rather, I said that "until such time" as a wholly natural origin of life may be found, "higher influences cannot be dismissed." I hope Mr. Zimny's letter is not an example of the evolution of discourse!

School Daze

Thank you for your excellent article on U.S. colleges and universities ("Broken Ranks," September 2001). As past president of state and city boards of education and president of a foundation largely devoted to pre-college education, it has troubled me that, unlike K-12 schools, colleges and universities offer no information as to the job they are doing in educating undergraduates. In addition to

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U.S. News, pressure for such information could be exerted by ongress (a condition for receiving federal loans and grants) and/or state commissions of higher education, which could require it.

As to your excellent point on "time on task," you might have noted how the college school year has shrunk. A study a few years ago found that the average number of instructional days at the top colleges had fallen from 192 in the 1960s to 168 today. K-12 public schools in Maryland are required to be open 180 days.

ROBERT EMBRY, JR.
President, The Abell Foundation
Baltimore, Md.

Quacks Like A Duck

I read your article "Scorin' with Orrin" (September 2001) and, while I agree with your sentiments, I also believe that you should have been even more critical of the Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act (DHSEA). George Orwell would have loved the name of this piece of legislation. It is not an educational act. Instead, it is an "Encouragement of Fraud and Quackery Act." I believe that most of the public is under the illusion that dietary supplements are regulated by the Food and Drug Association (FDA). After all, they probably can't believe that the government would allow the sale of products that are potentially harmful. But that is what this legislation does. There is absolutely no quality control or oversight of these products. Consumers have absolutely no idea what they are buying. The reality is that if the herbal industry were held to the same high standards as the pharmaceutical industry, it would go out of business very quickly.

STEVEN CERIER
Forest Hills, N.Y.

Viagra Kills

The article "Scorin' with Orrin," (September 2001) by Stephanie Mencimer is distorted and inaccurate. Painting the FDA as the supreme authority in charge of our safety is absurd. Viagra alone is linked to well over 100 deaths. DSHEA needs to be fully enacted before it can be faulted. Without full implementation of DSHEA, we will never know if the law really works. The American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) has submitted a formal request to FDA to complete one significant but to date unimplemented aspect of DSHEA by establishing Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) for dietary supplements. This trade group of American manufacturers welcomes the passage of GMPs for the herb industry.

In the year leading up to the passage of DSHEA, FDA received letters from hundreds of thousands of American citizens wanting to preserve their freedom and right to access dietary supplements. In the end, it was not Orrin Hatch, but the people of America who passed DSHEA.

DAVID BUNTING
via Internet

The Bad War

I was looking forward to buying David Halberstam's new book until I read Nicholas Thompson's review ("Besting the Brightest," September 2001). Both Halberstam and Thompson seem to think that Kosovo was a triumph, rather than what it was: an embarrassment with ominous overtones for the future. We intervened on the wrong side: the Kosovo Albanians not only were responsible for the vast majority of the prewar cease-fire violations, but they exterminated the Kosovar Jews with more enthusiasm than the Nazis. And it was our double-cross of the Russians—promising them a role in the peacekeeping if they pressured Milosevic to give in and then denying them a place at the table—which ended the war, not high-tech wizardry. That last betrayal cost Boris Yeltsin his office, giving rise to Vladimir Putin, who may be an improvement for the Russians, but who is a far less reliable ally of the West.

But of all the negative implications of the Kosovo bombing campaign, none was more disturbing than to see a completely intact Yugoslavian army march out of Kosovo with virtually no damage. After throwing billions of dollars of fancy weaponry at this army, we really ought to be asking how a primitive army like the Yugos managed to fool the whiz kids, rather than writing valentines to Raytheon.

THOMAS F. BERNER
New York, N.Y.

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Liberal or Conservative?

"I am an intellectual chap,
And I think of things that would astonish you.
I often think it's comical
How Nature always does contrive
That every boy and every gal
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative!"
—Private Willis on sentry duty at Palace of Westminster
(W.S. Gilbert, "Iolanthe," 1882)

More recently, we were interested to see the comments of "60 Minutes" creator and executive producer Don Hewitt on this liberal-conservative business, which seems to so preoccupy Washington's political classes and the media who report on them. In his delightful book "Tell Me A Story," he writes:

> "Don't you find, as I do, that the words 'liberal' and 'conservative' have ceased to have much meaning? Why, for instance, is it 'liberal' to endorse a strict adherence to the First Amendment and 'conservative' to feel the same about the Second Amendment? Still, since people apparently have to be one thing or another, I guess I'm both—a liberal and a conservative."

Hewitt's view is one probably shared by most news people. Those we know in the "liberal media," for instance, are often quite conservative in their personal views. And vice versa.

Labeling people's views, we find, is a tricky business at best, and we don't much care for the practice. We do recommend Hewitt's book, however. He obviously enjoys life and his book is a joyful newsman's romp through the last half century.

John Adams Associates Inc.
public affairs consultants
Washington DC

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

The Big Story • The Handful of Marshals • The Actor's Wife
Fleeing to the Hamptons • A Smart Tax Cut • And a Dumb One

ONE OF THE WAYS I PREPARE to write this column is by collecting clippings of newspaper and magazine articles that I found interesting during the preceding month. Then, the day before I start writing, I sort the clips, discarding those that on reflection don't seem so fascinating after all. This month, as I sat down to do the sorting, I found that my stack of clips was much larger than usual, and as I did the sorting, the number discarded was much less. This, I believe, reflects a media that has, since September 11, become vastly more relevant. Newspaper and television news, and even talk shows, have offered a steady diet of interesting information. At long last, we have a "Big Story" that really is a big story. Mindless gossip about the sex lives of public figures has taken a backseat where it belongs.

One hopes that this reform is genuine and that what the media decides are big stories continue to be about genuinely important subjects. It's hard to be optimistic, however, when *The New York Times* reported that fewer than two weeks after September 11, "Carol Wallace, the managing editor of *People* magazine, spent Friday morning with staff members, discussing how to move with sensitivity back into the celebrity grind."

"When a publicist called her last week," reports Alex Kuczynski of *The New York Times*, "pitching a story that might have flown three weeks ago, about the wife of a famous actor and her battle with irritable bowel syndrome, Ms. Wallace turned the story down. 'We're going to hold off on stories like that,' she said. 'We'll ease back into it.'"

All this is not to say that gossip isn't fun. Of course it is. For years our "Who's Who" column has been largely devoted to it. But, and it seems to me this is the important point to remember, "Who's Who" takes up about one-thirtieth of this magazine's content, which is just about its rightful share.

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I SHARE THE NATION'S ADMIRATION for the way New Yorkers responded to September 11. But the reaction of some of the city's wealthy reminds me that the rich are different. Take Suzanne Schiffman who, writes Abby Goodnough of *The New York Times*, "fled New York City and signed [her two] girls up for school in the Hamptons, where their summer home has become a semi-permanent refuge from the chaos of lower Manhattan." Schiffmann explains, "The public school they were attending in Battery Park City was pretty exclusive, and the ones they'd have to transfer to, I would never send them there."

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OF ALL THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS proposals, the one we favor the most is the rebate of payroll taxes, something we first proposed last March. Back then the idea got nowhere. But its time seems to have come. Just as we were going to press, *The Washington Times*, which has excellent sources in the GOP, reported that congressional Republicans "appear willing to back a Democratic proposal" for such a rebate. The reason we're for it is that it puts money into the hands of the people who need it most because they do not earn enough money to pay income taxes. They are likely to spend what they get, and spending is what the economy needs right now. On the whole, however, I would like to see the spending come not from individuals but from the government, not only for the prevention of terrorism, but also for other widely beneficial public purposes such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure rebuilding of sewers, bridges, and roads. So I'm against more tax cuts for the affluent.

Most of all, I oppose slicing the capital gains tax. Warren Buffett opposes the capital gains tax cut, as does Paul Krugman, and here's what former treasury secretary Robert Rubin has to say on the subject: "A capital gains tax cut, according to a 1998 Congressional Budget Office study, would have nearly zero effect on the economy in the short term. I think the effect could actually be negative in that the capital gains tax cut could induce increased stock sales."

What Rubin means is that if you've been holding onto stocks because you didn't want to pay the current capital gains tax on them, you'll be tempted to sell when the tax is reduced. Selling stocks makes the market go down, not up.

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YOU MAY WONDER HOW RICH New Yorkers are coping with the long security lines at commercial airports. "But how are we going to get to Vail?" one woman asked at

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a recent dinner party. Again, I rely on Kuczynski of the *Times*, who says the answer is to charter a jet, buy a timeshare in one, or hitch a ride on a friend's. While there's been a dramatic decline in the use of regular airlines, she reports that 80 percent of charter companies say they have had increased bookings since September 11.

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THE CATCH TO ALL THIS IS that the security at private airports and the private terminals at commercial airports is terrible. Passengers are not required to go through metal detectors; luggage is not x-rayed; in fact, cargo is seldom searched at all. Often there is no security for the planes themselves. "Many small airports lack even rudimentary security measures like fences, lights, or guards," writes Andrew C. Revkin of *The New York Times*. "I can go to any small airport, and you tell me which airplane you want to break into, and we just take off. That's how easy it is," one security consultant tells Revkin. Confirmation comes from another security consultant who writes in *The Washington Post*, "Worst of all, there is no requirement at these facilities that aircraft be locked, and many are left open or are protected by locks that can be opened in a matter of seconds. In most cases, starting a plane is easier than igniting the engine of a stolen car."

Aldrich Ames could be doing his duty by boozing it up at one embassy reception after another.

The consultant, Joseph Kinney, adds that there are 7,120 private jets, as well as 25,000 multi-engine private planes, each of which could "easily be transformed into a weapon of mass destruction if it were laden with explosives." Smaller planes "lack the weight and fuel capacity to take down skyscrapers," adds Revkin of the *Times*, but could pose a large threat if loaded with chemical or biological agents or radioactive substances.

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WHILE SECURITY IS IMPROVING for commercial airlines, it still has a long way to go. A tip-off of how far came when the FAA held a demonstration at its marshals' training school in Atlantic City. When reporters asked about the number of marshals currently flying, FAA officials refused to answer but, according to Ken Ward of *The Charleston Gazette*, West Virginia's senator Jay Rockefeller, who chairs the Senate subcommittee that oversees the FAA, told him that as of September 11 the number of marshals "properly trained for flight duty" was just 32.

If you want something else to worry about, consider this finding from the Transportation Department's inspector general, who recently checked seven of the nation's 20 high-risk airports, and according to Lizette Alvarez of *The New York Times*, "found that most airlines were *not* complying with new federal orders to scan all checked baggage for explosives."

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YOU HAVE TO BE TROUBLED BY the failures of the FBI and the CIA to figure out what was going on during the long, elaborate conspiracy that culminated in those three planes crashing into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. The CIA had warned the FBI on August 21 that two of the hijackers were in the country or on their way here, but the FBI was unable to track them down. Beyond that, the FBI failed to see the possible significance of a Moroccan who was seeking flight training, not in taking off and landing, but in operating a big jet while it was in the air. The problem is that the culture of the FBI does not emphasize the prevention of crime, but the apprehension and convictions of the culprits after a crime has been committed. Indeed, on October 8, the Justice Department had to order FBI agents to stop making the case against the perpetrators of the September 11 attack, and instead to make preventing terrorism their number one goal. Nor is analysis highly regarded within the FBI culture. This helps explain the failure to see the danger represented by the Moroccan flight trainee or to follow up on the warning that came from the 1996 Manila plot to blow up American airliners. "There is a caste system in the FBI that places more value on agents that collect information than the non-agents who put the pieces together," a former FBI administrator told *The Washington Post*. Another source said the FBI had been "taking secretaries and turning them into analysts."

Another big problem at the FBI is a lack of foreign language speakers, particularly speakers of Middle Eastern languages. It now appears that the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center would have been prevented if the FBI had been able to translate documents in its possession since 1990.

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THE CIA, AS LOCH JOHNSON revealed in our July/August issue, has a similar shortage of qualified analysts, and as this magazine has repeatedly pointed out, has the same language deficiencies. These shortcomings reflect an agency culture disinclined to leave the comfortable confines of the embassy and the diplomatic community. It used to be that, when the agency's primary aim was to recruit Russian diplomats, staying in the capital city and going to

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cocktail parties was a defensible approach to doing the CIA's business. Aldrich Ames could be doing his duty by boozing it up at one embassy reception after another.

But that approach never made sense when we needed to reach out for informants who are not diplomats. Randy Scheunemann, a CIA critic, asks, "How many CIA field agents have fluency in Farsi or Arabic—or Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Kurdish, or Baluch?" The answer, of course, is only a handful. Ignorance of language carries with it ignorance of culture, meaning agents can't come to a real understanding of the people they're working among. Reuel Mark Gerecht, a former CIA operative, recently wrote in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Unless one of bin Laden's foot soldiers walks through the doors of a U.S. consulate or embassy, the odds that a CIA counterterrorist officer will ever see one is very poor." In its early days, the CIA made a fatal decision to use diplomatic assignments as cover for its overseas staff, who soon became accustomed to the comforts of embassy life, with its distaste for mixing with the people of the host country.

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NOW BACK TO MORE CUSTOMARY "Tilting" material. Last week, my wife decided to count the number of Washington Yellow Pages devoted to listing local lawyers. The total is 82.

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ONE REASON ALAN GREENSPAN's repeated cuts of interest rates may not be working to revive the economy is that, even though banks are lowering the rates they charge for loans, they're making fewer loans. What happens in a recession is that banks become much warier of lending to the businesses that need the money the most, because it is precisely those customers who are most likely to default.

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A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF money has been raised by many different organizations for the victims of the attack on the World Trade Center and their families. New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer has proposed creating a list of every person who received help and how much help they got in order to ensure that the money is fairly distributed.

Maybe the CIA should send Gloria Steinem to Afghanistan.

The immediate response of Red Cross president Bernadine Healy was that she was "shocked." According to *The New York Times*, she vowed that her organization's files "will not be shared under any circumstances." I'm sure that Ms. Healy feels legitimate concern about protecting the privacy of the victims. But I also suspect that she wants to protect the Red Cross from having to disclose exactly how it spends the record amount of money it has received from its appeals for help for the victims.

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BEGINNING WITH THE REAGAN Revolution, the central purpose of the OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, at least during Republican administrations, seems to have been to stifle regulation, often to the detriment of public health and safety. It is therefore refreshing to see the office now encouraging sensible regulation. John D. Graham, the office's new head, who had been widely suspected of an anti-regulatory bias, surprised his critics by sending letters urging the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to increase the use of defibrillators and urging the Department of Health and Human Services to require the labeling of trans-fatty acid in food.

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MY SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE depth of today's patriotism is shared by *The Harvard Crimson*, which noted that college patriots "favor a military response so long as they can sit comfortably in Cambridge." The point to remember is that all this flag-waving is absolutely meaningless unless it finds expression in responsible citizenship, including service in the military and civilian agencies.

While military recruitment has not increased dramatically, it is heartening for us good government types to see a sudden surge of respect accorded government and government employees. Not only is trust in government rising from a low of 29 percent this summer to 57 percent in one poll taken last month and 64 percent in another, but more people are applying for government jobs. Fourteen hundred people have applied for 200 translator positions at the FBI; the number of applicants at the CIA has increased nearly tenfold; and a stunning 34,000 people have applied for air marshal jobs.

And the Big Story has brought about a radical increase in press coverage of government. Usually there are articles every day about the White House and Congress, but not many about government agencies. Now there are stories practically every day about the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, and the FAA. Today there was one about the Centers for Disease Control. (This will bring a rueful smile to this magazine's

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alumni who for years have endured my fruitless pleas to do an article on the CDC.) There have even been major stories on the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department's Consular branch—heretofore not exactly focal points of media scrutiny.

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THE IMMIGRATION AND CONSULAR services determine who gets into this country and for how long. They don't do a very good job of keeping out terrorists. All 19 of the September 11 terrorists had been issued visas by American consulates. Consular officers are deluged with visa applications and have little time to check the background of each applicant. In addition, "Most visa officers—the people who actually decide which foreigners can and cannot enter the United States—are diplomatic trainees, first-tour officers on compulsory visa assignments before going onto better things. Thus, the State Department entrusts its least-qualified personnel with the power to admit the worst people to this country," writes W. Wayne Merry, a former State Department official, in *The Washington Post*. "Visa work is a low-prestige relation to the conduct of diplomacy and always low in budget priorities."

The INS has devoted far more resources to keeping Mexicans from crossing the border than it has for keeping terrorists out of this country.

As for the INS, it has devoted far more resources to preventing Mexicans from crossing the border than it has to keeping terrorists out of the country. Incredibly enough, an applicant's membership in an organization advocating terrorism is not viewed as sufficient reason to deny a visa. In addition, the INS has no way of keeping track of the three million people estimated to have overstayed their visas. The inaccuracy of the addresses given by visa holders was demonstrated more than a decade ago, reports the *Post*, when agents visited 2,000 addresses to find visa offenders. They found one.

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THERE IS IN HUMAN NATURE A desire to say, "I was there" at some famous place or event. That's why we all want those snapshots of ourselves in front of the Eiffel Tower or the Taj Mahal. And that's why I suspect Houston Astros fans recently booed their own pitchers, even though the Astros were in a very tight pennant race, for walking San Francisco Giants slugger Barry Bonds instead of throwing strikes that he might turn into home runs. It was more important to be there when the home-run record was broken than for the home team to win.

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FOR AFICIONADOS OF THE MIND of the public relations man, *The Wall Street Journal* had this tidbit from Great Britain: An hour after the September 11 attacks, a top aide to Britain's Transportation Secretary sent out an email to colleagues advising, "It's now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury."

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WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT the Taliban and the forces it represents? Alan Sipress and Vernon Loeb report that "CIA agents have launched an effort to win the loyalty of dissident Taliban commanders through the use of money or fear." Sometimes the realities of war require such methods.

But I think we must also look for a more positive approach. Iran has demonstrated that people grow restive under the repression of Islamic fundamentalism. People want democracy and freedom. They want to have an education and a chance to earn a decent living. They want to have fun. To the rest of the world, the United States can stand for all of these things. We should use the worldwide facilities of Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Free Asia to make sure every Muslim knows what this country represents, including the women of Afghanistan whom the Taliban keeps from driving cars, holding almost any job, attending school after the eighth grade, and leaving home without being accompanied by a male relative and being veiled from head to toe. Maybe the CIA should send Gloria Steinem to Afghanistan. Seriously, it seems to me that women would be our most natural allies against Islamic fundamentalism—they just can't be fond of being beaten for showing their ankles, as Afghan women are today.

At the same time, we must make sure that we are not perceived as anti-Islam. President Bush is right in supporting a Palestinian state. Successive American presidents, especially Carter and Clinton, worked tirelessly for peace in the Middle East. We should, of course, continue to guarantee the security of Israel, but that does not mean we cannot also support justice for the Palestinians. We must remind every Muslim that we came to their rescue in Bosnia and Kosovo—and that we did so by taking arms against Christian Serbia.

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Now Do You Believe We Need a Draft?

We're in a new kind of war. Time for a new kind of draft.

BY CHARLES MOSKOS AND PAUL GLASTRIS

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS SAID THAT THE new war against terrorism will be "a different kind of conflict." He is more right than he knows. Not only are we facing a uniquely shadowy enemy, one committed to inflicting mass civilian casualties on U.S. soil. But for the first time in our history we are entering a war of significant size and probable duration (administration officials have said it may last for "years") without drafting young men to fight the threat.

Not only are we not drafting our young men. We are not even planning to draft them. Elected leaders are not even talking about the possibility of drafting them. That terrorists might poison municipal water supplies, spray anthrax from crop dusters, or suicidally infect themselves with small pox and stroll through busy city streets, is no longer considered farfetched. That we might need to draft some of our people to counter these threats—now *that's* considered farfetched, to the extent that it's considered at all.

America needs to wake up. We're at war. We need a draft. But because this is a new kind of conflict, we need a new kind of draft. A 21st century draft would be less focused on preparing men for conventional combat—which probably won't be that extensive in this war—than on the arguably more daunting task of guarding against and responding to terrorism at home and abroad. If structured right, this new draft might not be as tough to sell as you would think.

Churchill famously said that America could be counted on to do the right thing, after exhausting all other possibilities. On the subject of the draft, we are rapidly reaching that point of exhaustion. A draft might be avoidable if enough Americans were volunteering to serve. But we're not. Soon after the events of September 11, newspapers reported that the phones in military recruitment offices were ringing off the hook. Follow up with stories showed that all that clamor had brought virtually no new recruits. So far, our patriotism, though sincerely felt, has largely amounted to flag-waving and coat holding.

Perhaps we could get by without a draft if our all-volunteer military had more than enough troops on hand. But it doesn't. The actions so far taken in Afghanistan, and the buildup to support those actions, have been relatively modest. Yet with personnel cut by a third since the end of the Cold War, the services were hard-pressed to meet ongoing missions even before September 11. There is already talk of pulling U.S. forces out of the Balkans, something the Bush administration wanted to do anyway. But it will not please our NATO allies, whose long-term support we will need in the fight against terrorism, and who will have to fill the gap with more troops of their own.

We are calling up large numbers of reservists, but because so many of them work as police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians, our municipalities are being drained of precisely the people we will need if (when) the terrorists return.

Indeed, it seems clear that we are going to need thousands more men and women in uniform to deal with terrorist threats here at home. The president has appointed former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge as his new homeland security "czar." The federal government will be taking over airport security, either providing the services directly or supervising private firms

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providing it. However the restructuring shakes out, we are clearly going to need more federal armed personnel to guard dams, nuclear power plants, sports complexes, and U.S. embassies abroad; more border patrol and customs agents to keep terrorists and their weapons from entering the country; more INS agents track down immigrants who have overstayed their visas; more coast guard personnel to inspect ships; more air marshals to ride on passenger jets; and more FBI agents to uncover terrorist cells still operating within and outside our borders.

Where are all these brave men and women going to come from? Certainly, America is rich enough, and the need vital enough, that we could afford to offer significant salaries to lure candidates. But even in a weak economy, there is a finite number of competent people willing to choose a career that requires wearing a uniform, performing often dull work, such as guard duty, with alertness, and being ready at any moment to risk one's life for others. A whole range of government agencies and private firms, from the U.S. Army to Brinks to local police departments, must compete for this limited labor pool. And the pool is probably not expanding.

Consider this: Between 1980 and 2000, surveys showed that the number of young people saying they would definitely not serve in the military rose from 40 to 64 percent. The only reason this change of attitude did not destroy military recruiting efforts is that the need for new recruits plummeted with the end of the Cold War. But the military is feeling the pinch nonetheless. The armed services have had to double starting pay to recruit half as many enlistees, and the quality of new recruits is not what it should be. The number of enlistees scoring in the top half of the armed forces qualification tests has dropped by a third since the mid-1990s. In fiscal year 2000, the Army took in some 380 recruits with felony arrest records, double the number in 1998. Desertions are also on the rise. Most telling, over one-third of those entering the military fail to complete their enlistments. Contrast this with the one in ten of draftees who did not complete his two-year obligation during the Cold War. Much better to have a soldier serve a short term honorably than to be discharged for cause.

No Peeling Potatoes

Reinstituting the draft is the obvious way to meet the suddenly increased manpower needs for military and homeland security. This fact would have seemed obvious to previous generations of Americans. That today we aren't even talking about a draft it is a measure of the deep psychological resistance Americans have developed to anything that smacks of the state compelling anyone to do anything. Ideology plays a role here. In general, the left doesn't like the military, and the right doesn't like anything that interferes with the marketplace. When it comes to national needs, the left believes in something for nothing, the right in every man for himself.

The psychological resistance also gains comfort from arguments made by the opponents of the draft and by the military hierarchy, which also resists a return to conscription. (The military resists the draft largely because it resists all change; it opposed *ending* the draft in 1973).

One argument is that today's military requires professional soldiers, especially for overseas mission. Let's leave aside the fact that in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, most combat soldiers had only six months of training before being sent to war. Let's also grant that because of today's high-tech weapons and complex war-fighting strategies, the actual combat must be left to professional soldiers (though there is some reason for skepticism here). Still, there are hundreds of thousands of vital military jobs—not peeling potatoes—that could be filled with short-term draftees.

One example is peacekeeping. From experience with U.S. deployments in Bosnia and Kosovo, we know that combat troops tend to chafe at peacekeeping duty when they are stuck on bases with nothing to do and little opportunity to train with their weapons. But it's also clear that military police thrive on such assignments, because they get to perform the jobs they are trained for—patrolling neighborhoods, arresting troublemakers, intervening in disputes with a minimum of force. Military police work doesn't require that many special skills. After two months of basic and four months of special police training, new recruits are shipped off to places like Tuzla, and they do just fine. The average tour of duty in Bosnia or Kosovo: about 6 months. Short-term draftees, in other words, could easily do these M.P. jobs, and many others besides. This would free up more professional soldiers to fight the war on terrorism without requiring that the U.S. to abandon other commitments.

Draftees would not have to be offered the relatively high wages and benefits that it takes to lure voluntary recruits (an increasing number of whom are married with families). This would leave more funds available to raise pay for the kinds of personnel that the military is having a terribly hard time holding on to, such as computer specialists, mid-level officers, and master sergeants. To put it baldly, we now have overpaid recruits and underpaid sergeants. In the draft era, the pay ratio between a master sergeant and a private was seven to one; today it is less than three to one. Restoring something like the old balance is the best way to upgrade retention in hard-to-fill skills and leadership positions.

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All these arguments apply equally to the homeland security front. There is no reason why conscripts, with professional supervision, can't work as border guards, customs agents, anthrax inoculators, or disaster-relief specialists. Federal law enforcement agencies and unions will deny this with all their bureaucratic might, but it's true. It takes less than five months to train someone to be a border guard. The FBI turns applicants with law or accounting degrees into fully-fledged agents after only four months of training.

Other developed nations that have retained the draft typically use conscripts for homeland security. In Israel, draftees serve in both the regular military and as as lightly armed "guard police" along the Gaza Strip. They also man the "home command," which provides security and other services in the country's cities during emergencies, such as the scud missile attacks during the Gulf War. In France, which finally abandoned its draft last year (believing that threats to its security had diminished), conscripts worked alongside professional police in the *Gendarmerie* and provided emergency airport security when terrorists set off bombs in the Paris Metro in 1995. In Germany, most draft-age men choose to serve either in the military or in some form of civilian service, such as working with the elderly. But about one in ten chooses to work in a state or federal police force, providing such things as border security, or they train as volunteer firefighters and serve part-time for seven years.

One can imagine a similar three-tiered system of youth service in America, with 18-month terms of duty for all citizens age 18 to 25. In this new-style draft, conscripts would have what all Americans now demand: choice. They could choose to serve in the military, in homeland security, or in a civilian national service program like AmeriCorps (there's no reason women couldn't be drafted for the latter two categories). In return, draftees would get GI-bill-style college scholarships, with higher awards for those who accept more dangerous duty.

Back in Vietnam days, opting to fulfill your draft requirement stateside in, say, the National Guard, was considered a way to save your skin. That won't be so true in the new war on terrorism. As we saw with the deaths of firefighters in New York, homeland security duty can be dangerous.

The Sucker Factor

That brings up the second argument against the draft: that the sons of the elite will find ways to avoid service. Of course, that's even truer in an age of all-volunteer forces. But it's fair to ask: How can a draft be made equitable?

The best way would be to require all young people to serve. One reason more young people don't serve now is the fear that while they're wearing the uniform, their peers will be out having fun and getting a leg up in their careers. If everyone were required to serve, no one would feel like a sucker. They might even enjoy the experience; surveys show that most former draftees look back on their time in the service with fondness and pride.

It's possible, however, that the country won't have the need for every eligible young person to serve. What then? One answer is a lottery with no student deferments. (Under Selective Service rules established after Vietnam, college deferments are no longer allowed.)

Part of what makes Americans dubious of conscription is our memory of how the class-biased draft of the Vietnam War-era helped drive America apart. We tend to forget that the more equitable draft that existed during World War II and for 20 years afterwards helped bring the country together. During the peaceful years of the 1950s—a time not unlike our own, when the threat of mass destruction hung in the air—most Ivy League men had to spend two years in uniform, before or after college, working and bunking with others of very different backgrounds and races (the military, remember, was about the only racially integrated institution at the time).

This shared experience helped instill in those who served, as in the national culture generally, a sense of unity and moral seriousness that we would not see again—until after September 11, 2001. It's a shame that it has taken terrorist attacks to awaken us to the reality of our shared national fate. We should use this moment to rebuild institutions like the draft that will keep us awake to this reality even as the memory of the attacks fade.

A 21st century draft might be more welcome than most of us realize, especially among young people whose lives will be affected by it. While national leaders and pundits have avoided the subject, a potential return of the draft has been a hot topic of conversation among young people since September 11. "If it's something they want us to do for our country to keep us safe, then go for it," Ryan Aaron, a senior at U.S. Grant High School in Oklahoma City, told *National Journal*. Another young man, Julian Medina, a day laborer cleaning up office buildings near the still-smoldering World Trade Center, told *The Washington Post*: "If I have to, I'd fight to catch the man who did this." Not all young people are so gung ho; many, in fact, hate the idea. But at least they're talking about it. If their views can move from news pages to the editorial pages, and ultimately to the floors of Congress, then we could be on our way to a more secure and more unified America.

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Bush's Big Test

The President's education bill is a disaster in the making. Here's how he can fix it.

BY THOMAS TOCH

SOMETIME VERY SOON, POSSIBLY BY THE time you read this, Congress is likely to pass the president's education plan—a sweeping blueprint to reform the nation's public schools. But the legislation is a disaster in the making. The White House knows this. In fact, the White House and Capitol Hill insiders who drafted the legislation have known it for months—ever since the day last April, when Senate staffer Mark Powden showed them why.

Powden, then Sen. Jim Jeffords's staff director on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, was part of a bipartisan group of congressional staffers readying the Bush plan for a vote by the full Senate. The House and Senate committees had already signed off on the plan and its core proposal to test every third- through eighth-grader in the public schools and then sanction their schools (and school systems and states) if their test scores failed to improve. It was a plan on which George W. Bush had run for president—his single best claim to being a "compassionate conservative." The public was demanding school reform, and it was badly needed.

But Powden, an 18-year Hill veteran, doubted the plan's ability to gauge schools' performance correctly—the linchpin of the Bush plan. So, as an experiment, he applied the Bush model retroactively to test scores in Connecticut, North Carolina, and Texas, three states that had improved their scores significantly in recent years. He discovered that the vast majority of the states' schools—schools with established track records in raising student achievement—would be labeled failures under the Bush system. When Powden presented his findings to White House officials and his fellow Senate staffers at a late-night meeting at the Dirksen Senate Office Building "there was stunned silence," recalls a participant. Powden, they realized, had just turned the cornerstone of their school reform package into dust.

White House education advisor Sandy Kress, the testing plan's author, scrambled to draft a new plan that the Senate passed in June. But independent testing experts who had read the plan's fine print pointed out that the new plan was no less flawed than the original. Kress himself would later call the new plan "Rube Goldbergesque."

The White House and the staff of a joint House and Senate committee struggled throughout the summer to make the testing plan work. Bush political advisor Karl Rove was pressing for a bipartisan Rose Garden signing ceremony in September. But by the time Congress returned to work after Labor Day, the bill's authors still hadn't fixed the plan. Instead, new flaws had emerged.

Then came the events of September 11. Suddenly, nearly the entire domestic agendas of both parties—from Social Security reform to prescription drug coverage—were shelved. A nation at war, which could no longer afford partisan squabbling, submitted instead to a hasty bipartisanship. But, in late September, with both parties convinced that holding educators more accountable for their students' performance would strengthen public education, the president ordered a full-court press to get the bill passed by year's end.

So, rather than openly debate the bill's many defects, Congress is now under intense pressure to pass something—*anything*—fast. And the likely result will be legislation that hurts the nation's students more than it helps them, promotes lower rather than higher standards; misleads the public about school performance; pushes top teachers out of schools where they are most needed; and drives down the level of instruction in many classrooms.

There is a way out of this mess, however. The White House and Congress need to take a deep breath, grab a

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fresh sheet of paper, and sketch out a new accountability plan built around the one element many insiders privately admit is missing: a national test of reading and math. Such a test would have been politically impossible to pass just weeks ago. But the political winds have shifted so dramatically that if the president were to seize the moment, he could very likely make it happen.

If he doesn't, and Congress passes a big, badly designed federal testing and sanctions system, it could cripple the entire standards movement in public education—a movement that has been building momentum and garnering results at state and local levels since 1989. That year, Charlottesville, Virginia, hosted a summit between President George H. W. Bush and the nation's governors, led by then-Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. Bush and the governors bucked the nation's long-standing trend of local control in public schooling and established as a national "goal" that students in grades four, eight, and 12 demonstrate "competency" in challenging subjects such as English and math. Since then, ratcheting up standards has become a cornerstone of school reform at the state level. And greater accountability has been a principal strategy for reformers' pushing state and local educators toward the new, higher standards.

The revised Bush education reform bill rightly builds on this new paradigm. Measuring student performance and holding schools accountable for results is indeed a key piece of the school reform puzzle, especially for disadvantaged children. And the federal government, which spends $18 billion annually on the nation's public schools, has a right to demand results for its investment.

Choose-Your-Own Achievement Standards

Talk to education-testing experts and a pretty clear consensus emerges about what a strong national accountability system would look like. It would include tests that gauge students' grasp of higher-level skills and knowledge, not just "the basics." The tests would require students to write, solve problems, and perform experiments, rather than over-relying on multiple-choice questions that often give a false sense of students' abilities. (To illustrate the point: In one recent study, 80 percent of a national sample of eighth-graders could correctly identify the product of 9 x 9 when supplied with several multiple-choice answers, but only 40 percent were able to answer a word problem asking them to calculate the square footage of a 9'x 9' room.) The tests' content would be agreed upon nationally. And the tests themselves would be national: Each public school student nationwide would take the tests for his or her grade level yearly, permitting year-to-year tracking of individual students' progress. Schools would be judged both by how many of their students achieve standards and by how much their students' performance improves over time.

Had national tests been the basis of Bush's plan, Congress wouldn't be wrestling with a Gordian knot of methodological problems.

Had such tests been the basis of Bush's plan, Kress and his congressional counterparts wouldn't be wrestling, as they are now, with a Gordian knot of methodological problems. But when the Bush legislation was first introduced in January, everyone knew national tests were a political non-starter. They are strongly opposed by both the right, which adamantly believes that education policy is a state function, and the left, whose civil rights groups see testing as discriminatory against minorities, who historically underperform on such tests. Even the president has often expressed strong and seemingly sincere philosophical opposition to a national test.

As a result, the Bush plan lets the states choose their own tests and set achievement standards, a strategy that practically guarantees mismatched tests, low standards, and scant hope for real accountability. Most of the flaws in the Bush testing plan stem from the simple fact that Congress and the White House want the benefits of national tests without actually having to mandate them.

Consider this: Both the House and Senate versions of the bill require that states track the year-to-year performance of every school. But in an effort to avoid being seen as dictating testing standards from Washington, the legislation also allows states to continue the common practice of giving different kinds of tests to students at different grade levels. Yet if scores from these different tests can't be meaningfully compared to each other—and usually they can't—then how can you accurately track a school's year-to-year performance?

Similarly, there's lots of encouraging language in both bills demanding that tests be aligned with "rigorous" state standards. But only the House version explicitly

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requires tests to measure student progress against state standards. The problem is that more than half the states that already test as much as the Bush plan requires use off-the-shelf brand tests, such as the Stanford 9, which aren't based on defined academic standards. Instead, they compare student scores to a national sample of other students who take the test. Those other students might be well-educated or ignorant; they might know a lot of math, or very little—the tests don't tell you one way or another. However, the incentive to administer such tests is "tremendous," says Jennifer Vanick of Achieve Inc., a nonprofit created by governors and corporate leaders to push standards-based reform. The reason? They're cheap. Tests like the Stanford 9 cost about $6 a student per test compared to upwards of $30 for high-quality tests that require writing and other tasks that push students beyond basic skills. But constructing a single national set of high-quality tests would be the least expensive alternative.

Tests like the Stanford 9 will encourage teachers to spend more classroom time teaching students how to score better. Teachers will "teach to the test" under standards-based accountability regimes, too, but with a better end result: They'll help students score well on standards-based tests not by showing a few test-taking tricks but by helping them master the curriculum's content.

Of course, the great question about standards is how rigorous they should be. Set them too high, and many good schools and students will be marked down as failures. Set them too low, and many under-performers will be allowed to skate by. Having the right standard level will be especially important under the Bush plan, because schools that fail to meet the standard could have their students sent to other public schools, their teachers reassigned or fired, or their doors closed.

So how do the House and Senate bills deal with standards? By punting the decision to the states. States would have the freedom to set the passing grades on the

Who's Who

By Paul Glastris

When anthrax-laced letters turned up on Capitol Hill last month, House Speaker **Dennis Hastert** shut down the House of Representatives. His decision drew praise from colleagues who were able to head home a day earlier than expected. Media reaction to Hastert's decision was summed up in a *New York Post* headline: "WIMPS." By contrast, Senate Majority Leader **Tom Daschle** kept his chamber in session at the urging of fellow senators. In retrospect, Daschle's decision was probably the wiser one. But the question remains: Are senators really more courageous? Or do congressmen, who face re-election every two years rather than every six, simply have a stronger reflexive desire to get back to their districts?

President **George W. Bush** and most of his White House staff are winning extraordinary praise for their job performance since September 11. The same cannot be said for press spokesman **Ari Fleischer**. His public reputation took a hit when he censoriously warned that people like TV talk show host **Bill Maher** "need to watch what they say." Privately, many reporters are even more irritated by his querulousness and the stinginess with which he doles out information. At an Oct. 16 White House briefing, for instance, Fleischer refused again and again to characterize the sending of letters filled with anthrax as "bio-terrorism." Yet days earlier, Health and Human Services Secretary **Tommy Thompson** had said, "there's no question it's bio-terrorism," and Vice President **Dick Cheney** had said, "the only responsible thing to do is to proceed on the basis that it could be linked to terrorists." With so little information coming from Fleischer, reporters have had to go over his head, phoning senior White House officials for the most basic information—something unlikely to endear Fleischer to his colleagues.

In late September, conservative commentators, led by **Andrew Sullivan**, launched a mini-campaign to pin blame for the September 11 attacks primarily on **Bill Clinton**. The criticism was based on comments by ex-Clintonites **Nancy Soderberg** and **Jamie Gorelick** who told *The Boston Globe* that the administration could and should have done more to stop terrorism. But for the moment, the campaign has fizzled for three reasons. First, *The Washington Post*'s **Bob Woodward**, **Tom Ricks**, and **Barton Gellman** broke news of energetic if unsuccessful covert efforts by the Clinton administration to capture or kill **Osama bin Laden**. Second, it's become increasingly clear that the FBI, until recently headed by Clinton foe **Louis Freeh**, bears as much blame as any agency for failing to prevent the attacks. Third, conservatives

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tests used to parcel out the plan's rewards and sanctions. This is like having suspected criminals serve as their own judges and juries. What state facing federal sanctions is going to set standards high and increase its changes of getting whacked? "Inevitably, you would reward states with lower standards," says Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a conservative education think tank. What's more, the Bush plan would encourage states that already have high standards to lower them. "The incentives," says Finn, "are perverse."

Another flaw in the Bush plan is its dependence upon the U.S. Department of Education to police the states' testing efforts. Not long ago Republican administrations wanted to wipe out the department. But the Bush testing plan would require the department's bureaucrats to ensure, among a host of other things, that states build strong tests and set high standards—something they've been trying to do with only modest success for years. Congress passed an accountability system far less sweeping than Bush's in 1994. But since then only 17 states have put the required tests in place.

Many states, says Michael Cohen, an assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education in the Clinton administration, have largely ignored the prodding of federal bureaucrats, who lack the power to respond to the snubs. But the House and Senate testing plans give the education department authority to deliver only wrist slaps to recalcitrant states by reducing the federal money they receive to administer the testing requirements. "Who's going to care if you cut the number of state bureaucrats?" asks Cohen.

Under a single national testing system, of course, it wouldn't be necessary to cast the Department of Education in a role it's not prepared to perform. Instead, a national test would be relatively easy to regulate. Out-and-out cheating would have to be policed, as it is with other national tests like the SAT. But states wouldn't be able to flout federal regulations largely invisible to the

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realize it's hard to make a case that, prior to September 11, the Bush administration was any more vigilant than Clinton had been. One of many examples: The Bush White House hadn't gotten around to nominating anyone to fill the Pentagon's top anti-terrorism job until Sept. 15, when it hurriedly named **Michelle Van Cleave** assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict.

The residents of lower Manhattan have reason to feel especially grateful that the man who represents them in Congress, Rep. **Jerry Nadler**, had the foresight when elected in 1992 to procure a seat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The committee not only oversees FEMA, but will have much to say about how the area in and around the World Trade Center will be rebuilt in the years to come; Nadler is already advocating new subway stops, more ferry service, and a Long Island railroad station for lower Manhattan.

It would be hard to exaggerate how much Secretary of Defense **Donald Rumsfeld** and his top aide **Steven Cambone** were hated within the Pentagon prior to September 11. Among other mistakes, Rumsfeld and Cambone foolishly excluded top civilian and military leaders when planning an overhaul of the military to meet new threats, thereby ensuring even greater bureaucratic resistance. According to *The Washington Post*, an Army general joked to a Hill staffer that "if he had one round left in his revolver, he would take out Steve Cambone." Cambone's reputation in the building hasn't improved much since September 11, but Rumsfeld's has been transformed. Moments after the attack on the Pentagon, the secretary rushed to the scene, putting himself in harm's way to help with the rescue effort. That brave act won Rumsfeld deep loyalty within the military. He has also gotten high marks for the confident precision of his press conference performances, and for his willingness to delegate war-fighting tactics to the brass. Alas, the secretary still has not figured out how to manage the building. One insider reports that he and his management team have "completely lost control" of their efforts to organize homeland defense, with multiple overlapping task forces and bureaucratic turf battles grinding progress to a halt.

Like many magazines, *The Washington Monthly* often gets letters from eccentrics insisting that a cabal of powerful men secretly controls world events. A recent story makes you understand why they might think that way. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Saudi Arabia's Binladen Group, the construction company owned by the family of **Osama bin Laden** (from whom Osama is estranged), has more than $2 million invested in a military contractor buy-out fund managed by the Carlyle Group. Carlyle's chairman is ex-Secretary of Defense **Frank Carlucci**. Its senior counselor is former Secretary of State **James Baker**. The senior adviser to the firm's Asian Partners fund is former President **George H.W. Bush.**

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press and the public; if they refused to give high-profile national tests, there'd be hell to pay in the court of public opinion.

The White House realizes that the states aren't necessarily going to do the right thing under the Bush plan. And so, at the urging of the president's advisors, the Senate bill would require that every year states give a second test—the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)—to samples of their students to deter states from introducing watered-down tests and standards.

In theory, this is a clever idea. Congress established NAEP in the late 1960's to identify national trends in student achievement in core subjects. It's a strong test. It has high standards and isn't overly dependent on multiple-choice questions. Requiring states to give students NAEP every year is a big psychological step toward national testing—especially because the idea was proposed by a conservative Republican president with the backing of leading Senate conservatives such as Judd Gregg and Jesse Helms. (Many House conservatives hate NAEP's presence in the Bush testing plan. They demanded and won language in the House testing plan that lets states use tests other than NAEP, another big potential loophole.)

Unfortunately, the NAEP ploy won't work, because the test can't do what the White House wants it to do. It isn't an exact enough measure of student achievement to make it meaningful in year-to-year calculations of schools' eligibility for rewards and sanctions. "It's simply not designed to be very precise," explains Mark Musick, chairman of NAEP's governing board. Finn, who sat on NAEP's board in the late '80s and '90s, goes so far as to say that yearly NAEP scores are likely to contribute "exactly nothing" to the Bush accountability plan.

Yardsticks That Don't Measure Up

Yet another big defect of the legislation concerns the precise way in which student progress will be measured. Both the House and the Senate would require states to increase every year the percentage of students achieving "proficient"—passing—scores on their tests. Under this system of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), schools would have to get 100 percent of their third- through eighth-graders to the proficient level within 10 or 12 years. Rewards and sanctions would kick in when schools, school systems, and states hit or miss their AYP targets along the way.

The goal is a good one: a simple-to-grasp performance yardstick of the nation's vast public school system that requires real progress every year. To ensure that no major group of students is left behind, the plans take the further step of requiring that scores be broken down by subgroups of students: African Americans, Hispanics, females, the disabled, and those from low-income homes. Schools would have to make the same level of test-score progress in each category, or face sanctions.

But there's a serious flaw in the strategy: Test scores, even at the best schools, never rise year in, year out, as the House and Senate plans require. Rather, they fluctuate like stock prices, revealing trends only over the longer term. As a result, under either bill, vast numbers of schools and school systems would be rewarded or punished wrongly. This is why Mark Powden found that so many schools would be misidentified as failing under the Bush plan. And if Powden's congressional colleagues were stunned by those flawed results, imagine how parents and educators will react when they discover their schools were wrongly labeled as bad.

Test scores bounce around year to year because of a host of factors that have little or nothing to do with school quality, such as high student turnover, new teachers, or a bad flu season. Last spring, researchers Tom Kane at UCLA and Douglas Staiger at Dartmouth reported that 70 percent of the year-to-year change in average test scores in North Carolina's elementary schools is caused by such external factors rather than actual change in student performance. Richard Hill, executive director of the Center for Assessment, a nonprofit that advises states on testing systems, argues that "any system that relies on a single year's growth to measure school performance is driven largely by random error."

To make matters worse, year-to-year scores become even more unreliable when they are broken down by subgroups of students. That's because the influence of external forces increases when sample size shrinks. Kane, Staiger, and colleague Jeffrey Geppert released an analysis in July revealing that random fluctuations in schools' scores would cause 89 percent of North Carolina's elementary schools to fail the House and Senate AYP standards in math. When the researchers included the congressional demands for subgroup score increases, 98 percent of North Carolina's elementary schools failed the Senate's AYP standard, and everyone failed the House's.

The Bush plan for rewards and sanctions puts schools with large percentages of impoverished students at a particular disadvantage. Bush is right to encourage high standards for every student. Yet nearly four decades of research dating back to the landmark Coleman Report makes plain that such students, on average, don't score as high as affluent students, regardless of how expertly they're taught. What encourages the best teachers and principals in those schools to get out of bed in the morn-

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ing is not some vision of perfection, but the belief that with hard work and determination they can make their schools better over time. It doesn't make sense, as a result, for the Bush plan to sanction teachers making strong progress with disadvantaged students merely because their students don't meet a state's proficiency standard. Doing so would only drive good teachers out of bad schools.

There is, however, a way to fix the problem. The solution is to build into the Bush plan a system for tracking individual students' achievement over several years and rewarding schools that produce higher-than-expected test scores given their students' backgrounds. This so-called "value-added" strategy would require a large computer infrastructure to track students' individual progress. But it would produce fairer and more exacting judgements of school quality, according to testing experts. To ensure that students aren't subjected to what Bush calls the soft bigotry of low expectations, the Bush plan should use both value-added and absolute standards to judge schools. (For that matter, it should also use such non-testing indicators of school success as student and teacher attendance rates).

Sandy Kress, the president's primary education advisor and author of the Bush accountability plan, knows the strengths of value-added school evaluations. It was a short-lived, value-added pilot project in the Dallas public schools in the mid-1980's—one of the nation's first—which attracted Kress to rewards-based accountability in the first place. He discovered the then-defunct plan when he headed a Dallas school-reform panel in the early 1990's and resurrected it, making the evaluation system (which Dallas still uses) one of his commission's key recommendations. "I'm very high on the value-added approach," he told me recently. "It's a lot fairer to schools" than the Texas state system, which, like the Bush plan, uses the single-point-in-time, no-accounting-for-family background system of evaluating schools.

So why isn't Kress pushing a value-added strategy on Capitol Hill? Because introducing such a strategy nationwide would amount to imposing a quasi-national testing system. Value-added evaluations require that students at every grade level take the same sorts of tests in every subject every year. "The country," he says, "isn't ready for that." Congress, he argues, would refuse to dictate such testing requirements to states.

National Testing's Secret Supporters

Taken together, the unintended consequences of the Bush testing plan are daunting, and its flaws could jeopardize the plan's laudable goals, as well as those of the standards movement as a whole. In short, in its present form on Capitol Hill, the Bush plan is a gift to anti-testing, anti-accountability advocates.

The White House realizes this and has sought changes in the plan. Kress especially wants a system that identifies "only the absolute worst schools" for sanctions—the bottom 10 percent or so. He's talking up a model with congressional staffers based on a system used in Texas, where schools were shielded from sanctions as long as a required percentage of their students in each subgroup scored at the proficient level each year, a bar that would be raised gradually, but not necessarily every year. Kress and others want to reduce the influence of such things as student mobility on AYP calculations by having states average two- or three-years' worth of schools' test scores.

But Kress's 10 percent solution doesn't address the Bush plan's likely mislabeling of many schools and the damage that would do to its credibility. And averaging several years of scores doesn't do much to push states away from easy tests and low expectations. What's more, after heated protests by governors, Kress and Congress are also talking about giving states greater flexibility under the plan, which would only make matters worse.

The only true solution is national testing. It would not have been possible before, but it may be now, for several reasons. First, Congress and the White House have peeked into the abyss; they know they're on the brink of creating an immensely complex and flawed testing system. Second, more and more conservative leaders acknowledge, at least privately, that the accountability movement is pushing the country towards national testing. Third, since September 11, the public's stance toward national initiatives has changed profoundly. According to a *Washington Post* poll, 60 percent of the public now trusts the federal government to do the right thing, up from 30 percent in April 2000.

Consequently, Bush suddenly has the standing to push national testing. If he were to say to the Congress, "Take six months and build a credible national testing system," it might well happen.

Were he to do so, he wouldn't be in unknown territory. Back in the early '90s, Finn, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander, and other administration officials persuaded George W.'s father to take the unprecedented step of making national testing part of his school-reform agenda. States and localities weren't moving on the Charlottesville goals, Finn recalls, and he and the others wanted to push them to act. They pushed for voluntary national tests. A decade later, it's clear such tests should be mandatory.

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The Wisdom of Ann Coulter

After the September 11 attack masterminded by a terrorist hoping to spark a religious war, virtually every official and pundit knew better than to take the bait. Except for conservative commentator Ann Coulter, who wrote in a syndicated column on September 12 that in responding to terrorists "we should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity."

The column outraged the public, but conservatives, including *National Review* editor Richard Lowry, ascribed Coulter's column to grief over the loss of a friend in the attacks. But the next week, Coulter was at it again: "Congress could pass a law tomorrow requiring that all aliens from Arabic countries leave ... We should require passports to fly domestically. Passports can be forged, but they can also be checked with the home country in case of any suspicious-looking swarthy males." This time Lowry spiked her column. Coulter responded by calling Lowry and his staff censorious "girly boys." Lowry then dropped her as a contributing editor. Other conservative leaders also condemned her comments.

What's curious is that Coulter's comments aren't all that different, in tone and style, from hundreds of others she's made over the years. But in the past, her ire was directed at her domestic political enemies—for which she drew fulsome praise from conservatives. Last year, the Media Research Center presented Coulter with its "Conservative Journalist of the Year" award. The Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute bestowed upon her its annual conservative leadership award "for her unfailing dedication to truth, freedom and conservative values and for being an exemplar, in word and deed, of what a true leader is."

Coulter is spinning her downfall as a new kind of terrorist-war McCarthyism. "People are hysterical about speech right now," she told *The Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz. "Everyone's comments are being taken out of context and wildly misinterpreted." At the risk of further decontextualization, here are some of her past comments.

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"[Clinton] masturbates in the sinks."—*Rivera Live*, 8/2/99

"God gave us the earth. We have dominion over the plants, the animals, the trees. God said, 'Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it. It's yours.'"—*Hannity & Colmes*, 6/20/01

The "backbone of the Democratic Party" is a "typical fat, implacable welfare recipient."—Coulter's column, 10/29/99

To a disabled Vietnam vet: "People like you caused us to lose that war."—MSNBC, 10/11/97

"Women like Pamela Harriman and Patricia Duff are basically Anna Nicole Smith from the waist down. Let's just call it for what it is. They're whores."—*Salon*, 11/16/00

Juan Gonzales is "Cuba's answer to Joey Buttafuoco," a "miscreant," "sperm-donor," and a "poor man's Hugh Hefner."—*Rivera Live*, 5/1/00

"I think there should be a literacy test and a poll tax for people to vote."—*Hannity & Colmes*, 8/17/99

"I think [women] should be armed but should not [be allowed to] vote."—*Politically Incorrect*, 2/26/01

"If you don't hate Clinton and the people who labored to keep him in office, you don't love your country."—*George*, 7/99

"We're now at the point that it's beyond whether or not this guy is a horny hick. I really think it's a question of his mental stability. He really could be a lunatic. I think it is a rational question for Americans to ask whether their president is insane."—*Equal Time*, 8/19/98

"Clinton is in love with the erect penis."—*This Evening with Judith Regan*, Fox News Channel 2/6/00

On Princess Diana's death: "Her children knew she's sleeping with all these men … Is everyone just saying here that it's okay to ostentatiously have premarital sex in front of your children?" … "[Diana is] an ordinary and pathetic and confessional—I've never had bulimia! I've never had an affair! I've never had a divorce! So I don't think she's better than I am."—MSNBC 9/12/97

"I think we had enough laws about the turn-of-the-century. We don't need any more." Asked how far back would she go to repeal laws, she replied, "Well, before the New Deal … [The Emancipation Proclamation] would be a good start."—*Politically Incorrect* 5/7/97

"If they have the one innocent person who has ever to be put to death this century out of over 7,000, you probably will get a good movie deal out of it."—MSNBC 7/27/97

"If those kids had been carrying guns they would have gunned down this one [child] gunman … Don't pray. Learn to use guns."—*Politically Incorrect*, 12/18/97

"The presumption of innocence only means you don't go right to jail."—*Hannity & Colmes*, 8/24/01

"I have to say I'm all for public flogging. One type of criminal that a public humiliation might work particularly well with are the juvenile delinquents, a lot of whom consider it a badge of honor to be sent to juvenile detention. And it might not be such a cool thing in the 'hood to be flogged publicly."—MSNBC, 3/22/97

"Let's say I go out every night, I meet a guy and have sex with him. Good for me. I'm not married."—*Rivera Live*, 6/7/00

"Anorexics never have boyfriends … That's one way to know you don't have anorexia, if you have a boyfriend."—*Politically Incorrect*, 7/21/97

"I think [Whitewater]'s going to prevent the First Lady from running for Senate."—*Rivera Live*, 3/12/99

"My track record is pretty good on predictions."—*Rivera Live*, 12/8/98

"The thing I like about Bush is I think he hates liberals."—*The Washington Post* 8/1/00

On deciding whether to run against Rep. Christopher Shays (D-CT): "I really want to hurt him. I want him to feel pain."—*Hartford Courant*, 6/25/99

"The swing voters—I like to refer to them as the idiot voters because they don't have set philosophical principles. You're either a liberal or you're a conservative if you have an IQ above a toaster."—*Beyond the News*, 6/4/00

"My libertarian friends are probably getting a little upset now but I think that's because they never appreciate the benefits of local fascism."—MSNBC, 2/8/97

"You want to be careful not to become just a blowhard."—*The Washington Post*, 10/16/98

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Nest Eggs, Over Easy

Everyone who still wishes your Social Security benefits were invested in the stock market, raise your hand.

By Robert Shapiro

RARELY DO POLICYMAKERS GET THE chance to test the viability of a controversial proposal before it's enacted. But that's what happened on September 11. Right up until then, Washington was rushing headlong into a knock-down-drag-out debate over the Bush administration's proposal to allow Americans to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in private accounts. The administration was promising that the stock market, over time, would produce better returns than money held in the Social Security trust fund.

In turn, those private accounts, supporters have argued, would make up for the deficits threatening the Social Security trust fund in another decade or so, when the baby boomers start to retire. The president himself has shown no pretense of objectivity in the matter, appointing to his Commission to Strengthen Social Security only those who already support partial privatization.

During last year's presidential campaign, privatization might have been considered with a straight face, if only because the risks involved in sinking one's retirement nest egg in the stock market seemed like a thing of the past. Not investing in the exuberant market, in fact, seemed almost foolhardy. Then came the collapse of the NASDAQ, followed by September 11, and the biggest one-week plunge in the Dow since the Depression. Those events have effectively wiped out the investments of thousands of Americans.

Former Federal Reserve Vice Chair Alan Blinder has calculated (with others) that the annuity value of a retirement account for someone retiring in March 2001 would have been one-third less than that of someone who happened to retire 12 months earlier. The decline would be even more drastic—roughly half—if one happened to retire six months later, in October 2001.

Today, the notion that millions of voters would throw their support behind a libertarian plan that would cast aside the security of a government pension seems far-fetched. But diehard privatizers are undeterred. Michael Tanner, director of the Cato Institute's Project on Social Security Privatization, insists that recent events have not killed privatization. "In the short term it will probably scare some people," he said. "In the long term, it could actually be beneficial. The market will recover and it will show people that down markets are not forever."

Besides, he argues, "There is no guarantee of secure and known benefits in the present Social Security system. In the current Social Security system, people have no legal rights to benefits. Congress is free to change benefits at any time."

The White House is apparently toeing that line as well. In the weeks after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, former New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, chairman of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, moved to postpone the commission's report until next spring, given the country's new political focus. But the White House wants to push forward, still firm in its belief that privatization is a viable policy option.

It will have to make a pretty strong case to people like 59-year-old Rita Bregman, who was recently profiled

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in *The Washington Post* because she was on the verge of retirement until her stock portfolio plummeted from $120,000 to $4,154 in the course of a year. Instead of retiring, Bregman has had to take a second job. For her, traditional Social Security probably looks better and better.

Like it or not, the Bush administration is eventually going to have to reboot. But so too will all the other ideological factions warring over what to do about Social Security. As with so much else, the events of September 11 have shaken the foundations of the debate over the future of America's biggest social program. With a little luck, this might actually lead to a real solution.

Paying down the debt is not unpatriotic at a time when we also have to pay a great deal more to confront terrorism.

Warring Factions

Before September 11, nearly everyone acknowledged that Social Security faced what Bill Clinton used to call a "high-class problem." We're living longer and having fewer children, and so the system faces a financing challenge as the huge baby boom generation prepares to retire and collect its benefits from the less numerous Generation X. Apart from that, the major players in the debate haven't seen eye to eye on virtually anything, including whether this prospect calls for major reforms.

The factions in this debate generally fall into three camps. First are the privatizers, headed by President Bush. Their idea of changing Social Security to allow recipients to invest in the stock market is headed politically in the same direction as the stock market: downward.

Second are what might be called Washington's professional Scrooges, people like *Newsweek* columnist Robert Samuelson and organizations like the Concord Coalition. These folks see in Social Security another exasperating example of trans-generational self-indulgence. They've long argued that the program can be rescued, and our characters cleansed, only by some bracing benefit cuts for the boomers and salutary tax increases for the Gen-Xers. But with incomes slowing and Americans feeling unaccustomedly vulnerable, Congress is also not about to pass—nor should it—hefty benefit cuts for boomers and tax increases aimed at Generations X and Y to pay for the baby-boomer retirement.

The third camp is made up of traditional liberals, people like Henry Aaron at the Brookings Institution and the Democratic leadership in the House. Still misty-eyed and sometimes misty-minded for the glory days of FDR, they oppose virtually any change to Social Security, no matter how small. Traditional liberals believe that the retirement system can come through this demographic trial like a champion if we save the Social Security surplus, repeal the conservatives' latest pesky tax cuts for the rich, and pour the savings into the Social Security trust fund. This position has also become more tenuous since September 11, because with the full backing of Democrats, we are now back to spending the Social Security surplus to fund the war and stimulate a faltering economy.

Truth be told, I have sympathized with all three camps in various ways and at different points. Now it seems possible that the country's post-September 11 perspective could help us reconcile the three conflicting views. With a few politically achievable tweaks to the current Social Security tax and benefit formulas, the addition of a politically attractive new program to subsidize private saving, a little luck, and sound economic policy, today's younger workers can finance the boomers' retirement without making any notably greater sacrifices than the boomers did, and without having to accept greatly diminished benefits for themselves.

Scrooge's Medicine

My own political education about Social Security began when I was a tax and budget assistant to Moynihan. One of the lessons the senator taught me was to take great care in changing a program that, by virtually ending poverty among the elderly, represents the single most successful federal program of modern times. Though Moynihan himself is on the president's commission, his fellow commissioners at least seem to have forgotten that lesson.

The privatizers begin with a kernel of truth: Government should encourage young people to invest at least some of their savings in the market, as the affluent do today, and not rely totally on Social Security to pay their retirement bills. What doesn't make sense is their way of achieving this goal: diverting two per-

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centage points of the Social Security tax, about 15 percent of the system's annual revenue stream, to personal accounts. The stock market's recent free fall illustrates only one of the hazards. Such sharp market declines are neither unusual, nor always short-lived, nor necessarily tied to high-flying investments. Since 1950, there have been 12 years in which the real value of the S&P 500—a broad index of blue chip companies—was at least 40 percent lower than it had been 10 years earlier.

But let's say you have some of your Social Security money in a personal investment account and are lucky enough to retire in a year when the market is up. Your return still won't necessarily beat by much what it would have been under normal Social Security. That's because the brokerage fees to maintain your account come off the top. Even a one-percent annual fee would reduce your final balance by 25 percent—a fact privatizers don't like to advertise.

The worst thing about privatization is what it would do to the Social Security system as a whole. Every dollar diverted to private accounts is a dollar not available to pay current and future beneficiaries. This would leave a funding hole of about $3 trillion over the next 20 years—in addition to the trillions in deficits Social Security will rack up in future decades with or without privatization. Since conservatives know how to add and subtract as well as anyone, they can only mean to cut the mainstream Social Security benefit as well, and pretty steeply.

One who admits that is Cato's Tanner, who says, "It's almost certain that benefits are going to be reduced substantially in the future." Even if those cuts were limited to late boomers and Gen-Xers with new private accounts, their basic benefit would fall while the rest of their retirement security would be hostage to a lot of, ahem, market risk.

Of course, even if you take away the possibility of partial privatization (and you should, because it's not going to happen), Social Security must still confront the day in 2016 when payroll taxes no longer cover benefits, with trillions of dollars in shortfalls mounting indefinitely thereafter. We might have solved the problem for quite a while by using non-payroll-tax revenues from huge budget surpluses over the next decade. But, oops, the president and Congress have spent them on tax cuts that will amount to $4- to $5 trillion over the next 20 years, as well as on all the security, bailouts, and stimulus packages that have followed the September terror.

Enter the second party to this debate: the fiscal Scrooges. Their answer to the funding shortfall has long been equal-opportunity austerity: Cut the annual inflation adjustment for every retiree's check and raise the retirement age for the rest of us, so we all work until age 69 or 70. To fill the rest of the funding gap, the Scrooges suggest we simply get rid of some stray defense systems and disband a few battalions, close some surplus housing and education programs, and some extraneous tax deductions.

This ascetic approach to reform may add up on a spreadsheet, but it comes up against another lesson that I learned from Moynihan a year or so before he co-chaired his first Social Security commission in 1983: If you try to tinker with the country's most successful and popular program without a broad national consensus, you will fail. I learned that watching him in the great 1981 budget battle as he dealt a setback to the invincible Ronald Reagan. In the Reaganites' only significant spending defeat that year, Moynihan successfully headed off all the cuts in, what else, Social Security.

The Scrooges might just convince editorialists and affluent readers that the current system will be in peril unless we embrace their formula. But for now, one of the rare points on which conservatives and liberals agree—including President Bush, Senate leaders Tom Daschle and Trent Lott, and House chieftains Richard Gephardt and Dennis Hastert—is in their solid opposition to asking Americans to work longer, pay higher taxes, or give up spending programs to create private accounts or just keep the system going. That's virtually a death sentence for the austerity approach. And, of course, given the shape the economy is in, taking the Scrooge's medicine anytime soon could plunge us into a deeper and longer recession.

That leaves the love-it-and-leave-it-alone liberals and their position that no cuts in benefits are needed. Social Security can be saved in the long run, they say, by using the Social Security surpluses to build up the trust fund and running large non-Social Security surpluses to pay down the debt. That will leave the revenues now slated for interest payments to help pay benefits, underwrite a larger economy that will generate more payroll taxes, and make it easier for future generations to borrow or pay more taxes to finance the baby boomers' benefits.

Of course, it's fair to point out that we are currently spending the Social Security surplus. What is unfair is the charge that privatizers and the Bush commission make: that the whole idea of a Social Security trust fund is a sham.

The idea for the trust fund came from the 1983 commission that Moynihan chaired and was put into law by Congress that year. The 1983 fix raised, among

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other things, the rate of the payroll tax taken out of everybody's paycheck. The trillions in extra dollars that flowed into the trust fund were lent to the Treasury to fund the federal government's chronic deficits throughout the 1980s and much of the 1990s. And since 1999, when the deficit disappeared, they have been used to pay down the government's accumulated debt. The IOUs for that money lent to the Treasury now sit in the Social Security trust fund in the form of special bonds. There are $1 trillion in such bonds today, and the trust fund is projected to reach more than $3 trillion by the crunch year 2016, when the payroll tax revenues coming in will no longer cover the benefit payments going out.

The president's commission on Social Security has made the truly jaw-dropping claim that these bonds are not "real assets." By this, the commissioners apparently mean that government paper has less real economic value than private stocks or bonds, because government has to use tax revenues, borrowing, or the proceeds from spending cuts to redeem them.

To this claim, liberals pull themselves upright and point out, correctly, that the trust fund trillions are held in securities backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government, which makes them as real as a dollar bill. These securities are also real enough to provide the most secure holdings of every bank and corporation in the country, and to serve as the reserve currency for most other nations.

The notion that the trust fund is not "real" comes from the tenets of the small band of libertarians who started and still sustain the crusade to privatize Social Security. Behind this claim lies a serious political strategy. The trust fund is the linchpin for the long-term viability of a program that represents the foundation of the New Deal and the most successful initiative of the welfare state. If the trust fund is a scam and the program can't be sustained, the political philosophy and the political party that created and embraced it forfeit much of their legitimacy.

The Secret Plot To Kill Government

For dedicated privatizers, this debate isn't about just Social Security. It's also about health-care reform, tort liability, and environmental regulation; it's about the corporate tax and every other economic-related aspect of the conservative and libertarian agendas. In fact, the ambitions of those mounting this critique go even further: If the full faith and credit of government has no reality, government itself loses some of its legitimacy, especially its claim to any authority in economic life. And where would that take us?

Appalling as these claims are, my New Democrat radar still senses a tiny element of truth in the libertarians' nihilist position on the trust fund. When General Motors or Cisco has to redeem corporate paper, it finds the resources by doing essentially the same as government: drawing on its cash reserves, cutting spending somewhere, raising some of its prices, or borrowing more. But when GM or Cisco cuts spending or raises prices, its bondholders aren't affected. If the government cuts spending or raises taxes to fill a shortfall for Social Security, some of the beneficiaries will likely bear some of the direct costs.

If the full faith and credit of government has no reality, government itself loses some of its legitimacy, especially its claim to any authority in economic life.

Mostly, however, the libertarian attack is simply wrong, as well as a little dangerous. Securities backed by the government's full faith and credit have real value; in fact, they have greater value than the securities issued by General Motors or Cisco, since there's virtually no likelihood of ultimate default on U.S. government paper. Furthermore, the strategy of accumulating trust fund assets is not a sham; it makes eminent sense for Social Security. All those excess revenues reduce the deficit or, when the rest of the budget is balanced, produce surpluses that reduce the national debt.

Either way, it frees up more funds in the future to pay for Social Security by reducing future interest payments on the debt. It also increases payroll tax receipts down the line by expanding the capital available for business investment, which in turn tends to raise people's productivity and incomes—and therefore the payroll taxes they pay to support Social Security. The bigger the trust fund, the later will be the day of reckoning when we have to cut spending, raise taxes or borrow to make up the difference between what comes and what goes out of Social

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Security every year.

Of course, the trust fund strategy makes economic sense: It was Alan Greenspan, after all, who co-chaired the 1983 commission with Moynihan.

Gimme Three Steps

The trust fund is not enough. Fifteen to 20 years from now, Social Security's annual receipts won't cover the cost of its benefits. Trust fund assets will have to be redeemed, and the funds to do so will have to come from somewhere. Today, those running the government are for the most part baby boomers. We boomers can ease the burden on those who come after us by taking three steps, guided by what is sensible in each of the positions held by the three warring factions.

First, let's grant that the liberals are basically right about the long-term fiscal path we need to be on. We need to save the Social Security surpluses to pay down the national debt—a debt foisted on the country mainly by the political generation born or raised in the Depression and World War II, the same great generation that gave itself the best deal on Social Security. If we do that, we will leave a larger and stronger economy that can more easily generate revenues for our retirement benefits. Getting rid of the debt will also save our children hundreds of billions of dollars a year in interest payments, significantly pushing back the day of reckoning on redeeming those trust fund assets. Finally, if the next generation decides to borrow the funds to redeem those assets, becoming debt-free first will make it a lot cheaper to do so.

Paying down the debt is not unpatriotic at a time when we also have to pay a great deal more to confront terrorism. We can spend what is required to defend our country and civilization, without sacrificing the long-term health of both the economy and the Social Security program. There are other and better sources for these funds, including some of the large tax relief recently enacted for high-income people but not yet implemented.

Second, let's act on the kernel of truth behind the privatizers' agenda: Government should actively try to get young people to rely less on Social Security for their retirement needs, and more on their own private savings. The way to do this is to create 401(k) accounts for everyone outside Social Security, just like current 401(k)s. Today, about 40 percent of Americans work for employers that have set up 401(k)s. Let's make them universal so everyone can save and invest tax-free, regardless of where—or whether—they work. Let's have the government match part of these personal savings, just like most employers do, for their highest-paid employees. And let's get poor Americans, who have the most pressing need to save, started by having the government make the initial contribution. In a compromise that everyone but intractable supply siders and libertarians should welcome, conservatives get universal private accounts and liberals get to preserve the current system. And it could be financed by simply keeping the current 39 percent top income-tax rate in place.

So, at the cost of not cutting taxes for the richest two percent, we can make every working American a long-term investor, without jeopardizing Social Security. Moreover, this approach would particularly help Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers build their nest eggs on top of Social Security.

Third, give the Scrooges part of their due. We don't need to cut every retiree's cost of living adjustment or make everyone wait until they're 70 to retire. It's unnecessary and would be unfair to retirees living on smaller incomes, who work at physically demanding jobs that often require them to retire earlier, and who tend to die earlier, too. But we should push for fairer, more modest, and more politically achievable fixes: reducing the inflation adjustment for higher-income seniors, taxing affluent people's benefits like ordinary income, or raising the retirement age slightly.

One more thing: We should take back economic policy from President Bush's friends so it actively promotes higher productivity and growth. In place of tax cuts for the wealthy and tax breaks for oil and other favored industries, we could focus on selected new-economy investments in research and development, education and training while paying down the debt. Instead of caving in to demands for protection from steel makers and others, we can try leading the world on trade again, with a new multilateral round of talks and initiatives for new international rules in intellectual property and antitrust. Rather than coddle today's new economy giants, we could break open the markets for cable and other broadband access and open up more spectrum for third-generation wireless.

If we follow this course, Generations X and Y will be able to do their duty to the baby boomers, as the baby boomers did for the World War II generation. And they can do it without paying higher payroll taxes or suffering lower growth. We can keep Social Security sound and well for decades to come and preserve its great social achievement. And that's about as good a deal as any generation can expect. ●

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Memo *of the* Month

All employees State

U. S. Department of State

Cleared by: HR/EX Executive Office

Department Notice

Telephone Ext. X48171

TO: PS, Room 1758 N.S.

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Office Symbol: HR/ER/EP

Clarification of Leave Policy for September 11, 2001

HR/ER has received numerous calls regarding the leave policy for September 11, 2001 issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). HR/ER would like to clarify the following:

If a non-emergency employee--

- had scheduled annual leave for September 11, 2001 for the entire workday, leave should continue to be charged for the entire workday;
- called in sick at the beginning of the workday, he/she would continue to be charged sick leave for the entire workday;
- had scheduled leave for the morning of the September 11, 2001 but had intended to return to work in the afternoon, leave should be charged only up to the point of the Department's official dismissal and evacuation (1 0:1.5 a.m.). The rest of the workday is charged to excused absence.
- departed the office before official dismissal shall be charged leave from the point of departure until the tune of dismissal.*

Emergency employees are normally expected to report to work on time and are charged annual leave for failure to report to work. However, due to the unusual circumstances of September 11, supervisors should grant excused absence to emergency employees who were evacuated and unable to return to the building.

Additional questions regarding the leave policy for September 11 can be directed to Anita Brown, HR/ER, on 202-261-8171.

* Supervisors/managers can grant excused absence without loss of pay or charge to leave to avoid hardships. For example, excused absence can be granted to employees who needed to leave before official announcement of dismissal because younger children were being released from school/ child care centers earlier than the announced dismissal time and no alternative form of child care was available.

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God's Foreign Policy

Why the biggest threat to Bush's war strategy isn't coming from Muslims, but from Christians.

BY JOSHUA GREEN

SHORTLY AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 terrorist attack, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, two longtime figureheads of the evangelical movement, appeared together on the Christian Broadcasting Network to suggest the attack might have been caused by God's anger at American liberalism and secularism. "I really believe," Falwell said, with Robertson's concurrence, "that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen.'"

Their message was roundly condemned as hateful and self-righteous. But for the brief moment that it dominated the news cycle, many assumed it to be an accurate reflection of conservative religious sentiment in the wake of the attack. That was far from true.

A day earlier, Steven Snyder of the evangelical activist group International Christian Concern issued an open letter that put forth a very different interpretation: "America is witnessing what Christians in other parts of the world have been enduring for some time. We are at war with an unseen enemy that has demonstrated its resolve to launch a 'jihad' (holy war) on Americans, Christians, and Jews—and will show no mercy for innocent lives. We have turned a new page not only in American history but in the history of the world."

Snyder's response highlights a new and growing strain of evangelical politics—the movement for Christian solidarity. Since its rapid growth and mobilization five years ago, the Christian solidarity movement has turned evangelical energies toward an ecumenical vision of Christianity as a universal community. Its activists publicize abuses against Christians in Sudan, China, Burma, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, among others. Above all, Christian solidarity activists work to redirect American foreign policy in defense of Christian communities everywhere. In just a few years, they have put their mark on American foreign policy, most notably in Sudan where, over the last decade, two million Christians and animists have been killed by the fundamentalist Islamic government.

As the United States mobilizes against the Taliban, the Christian solidarity movement is rapidly finding new supporters. Despite the best efforts of the Bush administration to frame the current crisis as a nondenominational war between "terrorists" and "the civilized world," that outlook hasn't prevailed. Since the attack, the belief that the war is one of religion has gained currency in churches across the country (while Falwell's ideas conspicuously have not). Many of those, like Snyder, active in the movement to stop the persecution of Christians have concluded that Christianity itself is under attack. After Osama bin Laden stated that he was "at war with Christians and Jews," and after the Taliban foreign minister characterized the U.S. military response against Afghanistan as "a Christian crusade ... under the flag of the Cross," it is not difficult to understand why.

But while the Christian solidarity supporters don't express many moral qualms about using military force, they're surprisingly ambivalent about the administration's general strategy. The reason: In its war against terrorism, the White House has extended the hand of

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friendship to precisely the countries the movement has opposed—notably Sudan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. The evolving tension between Bush and this key element of his constituency promises to shape the prosecution of the war on terrorism.

The Bush administration assumed power with a well-formed perspective on foreign policy that's been dubbed "realist" by its proponents (who include Vice President Dick Cheney, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, and the president himself). Realist foreign policy is premised on the belief that the world is a nasty place; that it is morally and strategically misguided to try to "police" the world; that military muscle should be used solely to further America's national security interests; and that doing so will sometimes entail exercising power in ways that are themselves nasty and brutal. The Reagan administration's efforts to aid the Nicaraguan *contras* are a defining example.

Not surprisingly, the Bush administration was openly disdainful of what it considered to be the soft humanitarianism of the Clinton administration, and the left-leaning human rights groups that seemed to drive its foreign policy. During the campaign and afterward, Bush disparaged Clinton's willingness to lend American military might to stopping bloodshed and famine in places like Haiti, Kosovo, and Somalia. "If we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions," Bush warned during the campaign, "then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road."

The terrorist attacks presented Bush with an opportunity to put his doctrine into practice. This was a direct strike on the U.S., not some marginal conflict like Kosovo. The administration quickly allied itself with some of the world's most dangerous regimes, including Sudan and Syria, which the State Department classifies as "state sponsors of terrorism." (Sudan made the list for, among other things, providing a safe haven to Osama bin Laden. While operating in Sudan from 1993 to 1996, bin Laden subsidized the ruling Islamic government and, with their protection, built a vast terrorist network.) The idea behind Bush's hardline approach was best characterized by journalist Robert Kaplan in *The Washington Post*: "Foreign policy must return to what it traditionally has been: the diplomatic aspect of national security rather than a branch of Holocaust studies."

Put another way, the U.S. is back to a Cold War foreign policy that willingly engages unsavory regimes to advance national security interests. For the moment, the country is behind this effort. But this nearly universal support may not last. The growing Christian solidarity movement presents a challenge no Republican administration in memory has had to face: a human rights force on the right openly critical of the morality of the administration's foreign policy. As the war progresses, the Christian solidarity movement is likely to join with administration critics on the left, making Bush's fight against terrorism more complicated, but perhaps more effective.

Onward Christian Soldiers

On a crisp Sunday morning in late September, Pastor Chris Robinson is delivering a sermon intended to help his congregation at Grace Bible Church put the events of September 11 in perspective. The church is located in the tiny burg of Marshall, tucked among the rolling hills of northwest Virginia's horse country in the heart of the nation's most active Christian solidarity community. Robinson's congregation of 200 consists mostly of young families who have been active in the Christian solidarity movement for years. Recently, members returned from relief missions to isolated communities of Christians in Burma and Sudan.

To members of Grace Bible Church, the attack carried special resonance because it brought home an issue that until now had been, quite literally, a foreign concern. "There are Christians being persecuted all over the world today," Robinson told his congregation. "Now that is true in our own country." One by one, churchgoers rose to testify to this issue. Many offered prayers for fellow Christians who'd perished in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Others expressed hope that the sudden interest in hostile religious regimes overseas would bring national attention to their cause. Quite a few, however, were troubled by the alliance Bush struck with countries like Sudan. "I'm forced to see it as the lesser of two evils," said David Servideo, 24, echoing the comments of others. "But my fear is that it will set back our efforts to help those people."

Robinson's sermon explained how a thoughtful Christian might react to the world that's emerged since the attack. He talked about the Apostle Paul's struggle to revitalize the feuding Christian community in Corinth, and drew a parallel to the need for Christians to revitalize their own faith so they can once again carry their mission to those abroad. Unlike Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, Robinson considers the attack the ultimate confirmation of a worldview that sees Christians as a despised victim group and the current war as one between Christianity and those

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who would vanquish it. "Terrorists want change," he he told his congregation. "But God wants change, too. And His changes will begin in churches across our land. There are thousands of other churches of like mind. It is a Herculean task that we have before us."

Robinson meant his call to action literally. His congregation is comprised of bedrock Republicans who are politically active. Along with Christian solidarity, Grace Bible Church runs programs for home schoolers and anti-abortion activists. For the last five years, the local congressman, Frank Wolf (R-V.A.), has led an effort in Congress to "remoralize" foreign policy to address religious oppression abroad. Backed by a growing movement of congregations like Grace, Wolf helped put this idea into practical political terms through bills creating an ambassador-at-large for religious freedom, and mandatory sanctions against nations that abuse it. Most recently, they convinced President Bush to appoint a special envoy to Sudan in an effort to help end the state-sponsored persecution of Christians.

Screaming Me Awake

Many of today's activists view their mission as the natural continuation of the work of such figures as William Wilberforce, a devout evangelical Christian who fought to outlaw the slave trade in the British Empire in the late 18th and early 19th century. The few groups doing this work in the 1970s, like Christian Solidarity International-U.S.A., focused mostly on publicizing religious oppression behind the Iron Curtain. But for the most part, mainstream human rights groups of the day were concerned about human rights in general, not Christian persecution in particular. About the only mainstream human rights activist who took an early interest in the persecution of Christians was Nina Shea. In the 1980s, Shea witnessed how Sandinista abuses in Nicaragua often singled out priests. Shea was inspired by her experience, and helped form the Puebla Institute to document religious oppression (since absorbed by the human rights group, Freedom House). To Shea and other conservatives, the reluctance of the human rights establishment to adopt this cause revealed the powerful mainstream disdain for religious conservatives.

Their frustration must have been magnified by the achievements of the left-leaning human rights establishment. The '80s and early '90s were a robust time for human rights activists, whose campaigns to end South African apartheid, the Ethiopian famine, and oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union each gained public attention. The human rights movement of this period was essentially pacifistic and usually averse to U.S. military action. The Reagan administration's support of often-brutal anti-Communist regimes in Latin America and Africa provided a target-rich environment.

But the U.S. experience in the Balkans in the 1990s caused a fundamental shift in outlook. Many of the humanitarian groups on the ground in places like Bosnia witnessed firsthand the failure of United Nations efforts to stop Serb atrocities against Muslims, which eventually drove a large portion of them to advocate U.S. military intervention. Partly through their clout with key Clinton administration officials such as Richard Holbrooke and Madeleine Albright, the White House, initially averse to military engagement, armed the Bosnian Muslims and Croats and bombed the Bosnian Serbs in 1995, helping to end the Bosnian civil war. Another bombing campaign against Serb forces in Kosovo and Serbia in 1999 ended the war in Kosovo, and paved the way for the downfall of the Milosevic regime.

As establishment human rights groups were becoming hawkish, a nascent movement on the right began to emerge. Most observers trace the beginning of this movement to July 5, 1995, when Michael Horowitz, former general counsel in Reagan's Office of Management and Budget, published an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled, "New Intolerance Between the Crescent and the Cross." Horowitz, a Jewish neoconservative and a senior fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute, detailed the plight of persecuted Christians in Africa and the Middle East. He concluded by calling for intervention. "For American Jews, who owe our very lives to the open door of the blessed land," he wrote, "silence should not be an option in the face of persecutions eerily parallel to those committed by Adolf Hitler." Horowitz says his editorial did not elicit a single response.

Shea and Horowitz connected that same year and began working to put the issue of Christian persecution on the map. Undaunted by the initial lack of interest, Horowitz wrote to 150 mission boards alerting them to the crisis. In January 1996, the pair hosted a conference on "Global Persecution of Christians" in Washington, D.C., which drew religious leaders from across the country. This time, the issue hit big. The National Association of Evangelicals issued a statement of conscience supporting the fight against Christian persecution. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Southern Baptists each lent their support. Horowitz also helped establish an International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church to raise public

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awareness, an idea he says came to him one morning in the shower.

With much of the intellectual leadership coming from Washington, the Christian persecution movement began spreading a simple message: Millions of Christians face terrible persecution from oppressive regimes in China and in many Muslim countries. But American foreign policy is so concerned with opening new markets that these abuses have been ignored. "Christians are the Jews of the 21st century," says Horowitz, repeating a favorite soundbite.

To the surprise of many, the issue of persecuted Christians captured the concern of evangelical Protestants. For churches like Grace Bible Church, which became active in the Christian solidarity movement five years ago, it complemented their own efforts to evangelize overseas. One of the groups Grace is committed to helping is an isolated community of Christians living in the jungles of Burma. Converted to Christianity by missionaries in the 19th century, the Burmese community is a target of frequent government attacks. Evangelicals who took up the cause of persecution began sending relief workers there in the 1990s. Several of Robinson's parishioners—men and women mainly in their twenties—make regular journeys into the jungle. Protected by armed guards, they build mobile hospitals and schools, which often last only a few months before they're burned to the ground by the Burmese army.

As it spread among evangelicals, the movement also came to include conservative Jews and Catholics, Southern Baptists and some of the more open-minded liberal activists like Rabbi David Saperstein, of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. But the issue seemed particularly appealing to evangelicals for whom Reagan conservatism was primarily a moral—rather than an economic—political movement. In was the involvement of this group, whose foot soldiers had turned abortion and school choice into national political issues, that helped popularize the issue of Christian persecution.

While the grassroots of the movement was learning about Christian persecution firsthand, Horowitz enlisted Beltway heavyweights like Chuck Colson, James Dobson, and William Bennett, and appealed to members of Congress like Frank Wolf and Chris Smith (R-N.J.) in the House, and Arlen Specter (R-P.A.) and Sam Brownback (R-K.S.) in the Senate. Working outside mainstream media outlets, this group disseminated its message through religious channels like radio broadcasts and denominational newsletters. Horowitz found a valuable ally in *New York Times* columnist Abe Rosenthal, who admitted that Horowitz "screamed me awake" on the issue of Christian persecution. "What happened was done beneath the radar screen of official Washington," Horowitz says. "Yet when members would get back home to their districts, ministers would approach them and say, What are you doing about Sudan and Christian persecution?"

The same foot soldiers who turned abortion and school choice into national political issues are today lobbying on behalf of persecuted Christians.

Just Ain't My Cross to Bear

The movement first took legislative shape when Wolf and Specter introduced The Freedom from Religious Persecution Act in 1997. Modeled after legislation from the 1970s designed to penalize the Soviet Union for denying Jews the right to emigrate, the Wolf-Specter bill established an ambassador-at-large position for religious freedom, required the State Department to issue a detailed annual report on the status of religious liberties around the world and, most controversially, required the president to take one of 15 diplomatic actions against any country designated an especially egregious violator of religious rights. The bill was so upsetting to the State Department that Horowitz claims Madeleine Albright accosted him in a restaurant shortly after its introduction. "She launched into a diatribe about how the Wolf-Specter bill would destroy her capacity to conduct foreign policy," he says.

The Christian lobbyists did not just irritate the Clinton administration, but also powerful Republicans in Congress more interested in getting at Sudan's oil reserves than ending Christian persecution. The religious and business wings of the Republican Party had clashed a year earlier over giving China, another abuser of Christians, most-favored-nation trading status. Religious conservatives lost that battle outright.

They did better with Wolf-Specter. Business lob-

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byists weakened the bill by giving the president considerable flexibility to waive sanctions. Nonetheless, passage of what became the International Religious Freedom Act was an important symbolic victory. The ambassador-at-large for religious freedom and the State Department's annual report on the status of religious liberties ensured that the issue of Christian persecution would stick around. While many in the human rights community, including some churches, argued that there should be "no hierarchy of rights"—that any violation of a fundamental protection counts as much as any other—both sides recognized that a right with its own $2 million-dollar line item in the federal budget is more equal than others.

It is not difficult to imagine tens of thousands of Christians amassing on the Mall to denounce the administration's outreach to repressive Islamic states.

Religious persecution generated enough interest among conservative and, increasingly, mainstream congregations to launch a new special-interest community. Congregations heard about—and told Congress about—ministers jailed and churches bulldozed in China, as well as Christians enslaved in southern Sudan, slaughtered in Burma, beheaded in Saudi Arabia, and hounded in Iran and Iraq. Sympathetic observers estimated that in 1997, 60,000 American congregations participated in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, and that 100,000 joined in the following year.

Karl Rove and Rev. Al

In the last two decades, two million black Christians and animists in southern Sudan have died of starvation, disease, or ethnic cleansing at the hands of the fundamentalist Islamic government in the north. News that slavery persists in Sudan has helped bring wider public awareness to the area. President Bush took office with a veteran foreign policy team that had little desire to become entangled in a messy humanitarian mission to Africa. So narrow were Bush's foreign policy goals that a group of two dozen influential conservatives (including Elliot Abrams, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, and Marvin Olasky) admonished the president to make priorities of religious freedom and human rights in a letter that also carried this subtle threat: "As America's religious communities join forces with traditional human rights groups in calls for robust human rights and pro-democracy policies, any administration indifferent to those concerns risks serious loss of their support and broad public support in general." The letter listed several places that Bush was encouraged to address. Topping the list was Sudan.

In a sense this was nothing new. Neocons convinced Ronald Reagan to use the language of human rights in his battle against the Soviets. (Reagan first invoked the term "evil empire" to describe the Soviet Union at an evangelical convention.) What's changed is the conservative human rights coalition's relationship to the administration in power. During the Reagan years, conservative moralists and conservative realists wanted the same thing: a rollback of Communist oppression, by military means if necessary. But under Bush their interests diverged. The moralists wanted the White House to address Sudan. That was the last thing the administration wanted to do.

Despite the White House's considerable efforts to please the religious right, the Christian persecution activists had little early success apart from token mentions in speeches. Even Karl Rove, who masterminded Bush's ties to religious conservatives, did not respond immediately. "Rove needed some persuading [to give Christian persecution] the kind of attention seen with Catholics," says a Republican legislative aide. Persuasion came from Frank Wolf, who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the State Department's budget. "Rove soon saw the politics of it and [found] a way to make it happen," says the aide.

To the realists driving the Bush administration's foreign policy, the conservative human rights crowd was a headache. But it was one Bush could ignore at his own peril. In March, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which stemmed from the Wolf-Specter bill, issued a report calling Sudan "the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief" and called on the Bush administration to step in. Rather than let him repeat his father's mistakes, Rove listened and the administration grudgingly made concessions. It helped that the Christian right had supporters in key positions within the administration, including Elliot Abrams, human rights director of the National Security Council, and John Bolton, Under Secretary of State.

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It also helped that the victims of persecution were black, since outreach to blacks was part of Rove's political strategy. With groups like the National Black Leadership Committee and the NAACP joining the chorus against Sudan, the Christian persecution movement became a considerable political force. Horowitz and black leaders made a conscious effort to model their campaign on the struggle against South African apartheid. In March, Colin Powell, America's first black secretary of state, testified before Congress that "there is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today than the tragedy that is unfolding in Sudan."

Taking another page from the left, movement leaders also attracted celebrities. Franklin Graham (son of the Rev. Billy Graham), who runs a relief mission in southern Sudan, lobbied Bush personally. In April, Horowitz was arrested, along with a black D.C. minister, Walter Fauntroy, and radio talk-show host Joe Madison, for chaining himself to the Sudanese embassy in Washington. In a show of support, Johnnie Cochran defended Horowitz in court, while Fauntroy and Madison enjoyed the services of Ken Starr. (Charges were dropped.) That same month, the Rev. Al Sharpton visited Sudan, announcing upon return that he planned to revisit the troubled country with, among others, pop star Michael Jackson.

Early in the administration, the White House announced it was ending the practice of assigning special envoys—a none-too-subtle indication that it would not be drawn, as the Clinton administration had been, into endless diplomatic negotiations over marginal ethnic and religious disputes. But last summer the administration began plans to appoint a special envoy to Sudan. Even this proved difficult. Powell's initial choice, Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs under Reagan, turned the job down, citing the growing anti-Sudan coalition. Others mentioned for the job included William Bennett, James Baker, Al Gore, Newt Gingrich, and Jimmy Carter. On Sept. 7, the administration settled on former Missouri Sen. John Danforth. The issue appeared to have reached critical mass.

Over the summer, a Republican Party showdown over Sudan between business interests and religious conservatives appeared imminent. Both sides had been pushing the administration to end the Sudanese civil war, the business crowd because of Sudan's oil interests. In June, the House passed the Sudan Peace Act (the Senate passed it in July), which condemned slavery and human rights abuses and sought to put economic pressure on Sudan. But the House version was stronger. It included an amendment by Rep. Spencer Bachus prohibiting oil companies doing business in Sudan from raising capital or being listed on U.S. capital markets. Under pressure from corporate interests in the U.S., the Bush administration threatened to veto the bill. To the outrage of religious conservatives and many in the black community, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher announced in August that sanctions "would undermine our financial market competitiveness and end up impeding the free flow of capital worldwide."

On September 11, at nine in the morning, Horowitz arrived in Sen. Brownback's office to plot a counterstrategy. They settled on a dozen ideas they could send along that both were comfortable with and believed they could sell to activists around the country. "As I was sitting there," says Horowitz, "Sam was literally about to pick up the phone to call Karl Rove and say, 'We're out of the dilemma,' when suddenly aides rushed in, hustled us out of the building and told us that the country was under attack."

Suddenly Sudan

In the wake of the attack, Christian solidarity leaders recognized that the foreign policy ground had fundamentally shifted. Countries such as Sudan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan suddenly were of great interest to the administration, not because they persecuted Christians, but because they possessed intelligence vital in the new struggle. But rather than get tough on these countries, Bush embraced them. Christian solidarity activists were furious. "Our entire foreign policy had been on this litmus case of Sudan," says Shea. "That's where the human rights action had been. Now our entire foreign policy has been subjugated to the war on Osama bin Laden."

Even so, Horowitz saw an opportunity. On Sept. 12, as Bush was scrambling for language that would frame the attacks and the U.S. response in acceptable terms, Horowitz faxed his allies in the administration the work of David Forte, a law professor at Cleveland State University and conservative Catholic who's written extensively on the issue of Christian persecution (including contributing a chapter to Nina Shea's 1997 treatise, *In the Lion's Den: Persecuted Christians and What the Western Church Can Do About It*). Forte argued that modern Islam had been hijacked by an ancient strain of radical fundamentalism that was closer to fascism than to the spirit of tolerance preached by the Koran. In a sense, his argument fit the administration's desire to cast the fight in a way that wouldn't alienate moderate Muslims. White House speechwriters transformed Forte's thesis into the most pivotal

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passage of Bush's Sept. 20 joint address to Congress: "We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety ... They follow the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

"By borrowing from the language [of the Christian persecution movement], they're tuning in on the people that they want to reassure with the words necessary to do so," says an aide on the House Foreign Relations Committee. But by ignoring the rest of Forte's argument—that radicalized Islamic governments and the millions who share their views are persecuting millions of Christians worldwide—Bush essentially secularized the movement's theology, to the dismay of its proponents.

Christian activists were further alarmed when the U.S. allowed the U.N. to lift travel sanctions from Sudan on Sept. 28. U.N. efforts to end economic sanctions also appear to have White House backing. On Sept. 19, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-C.O.) was on the floor of the House about to call for a conference committee on the Sudan Peace Act, when he was intercepted by administration officials. The Sudan Peace Act has since been shelved. State Department Policy Planning Director Richard Haass has privately told colleagues that at this point the administration has no interest in human rights considerations.

While the State Department has attempted to portray renewed diplomatic relations with Khartoum as a sign of the wayward government's having foresworn terrorism—"Their cooperation was really terrific," Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said on Oct. 12—the Sudanese government believes otherwise. Even before Armitage's sunny assessment, an adviser to the Sudanese president denied his regime was part of any alliance, telling *The Wall Street Journal*, "In the government, the main feeling is that we want to get America off our backs. We are not so concerned about their friendship; we just don't want them as enemies."

Apparently, the Sudanese have succeeded. In early October, the government of Sudan bombed U.N. aid workers in southern Sudan for three days, prompting the enraged U.N. to close its food distribution program and pull out. The awkwardness of the new U.S. position was best captured in a Reuters headline on the attacks: "U.S. Slams Sudan For Bombings, Still Wants Its Help."

With Sudan no longer a pariah, Christians' strategy of economic isolation was suddenly obsolete. On Oct. 11, religious leaders and representatives of human rights groups met in a cramped basement meeting room at Freedom House to devise new tactics. The group included not only evangelical leaders, but also representatives of the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Southern Baptist churches, and black civic and religious organizations. At a time when most Americans were singing Bush's praises, those at this meeting were astonished and angry. As activists traded rumors over Sprite and cookies, the hottest commodities were the cell phone numbers for key State Department officials.

Three decisions emerged from the meeting. First, the group agreed to publicize the ongoing Sudanese attacks on Christians and U.N. workers. Second, it decided to push for a cease-fire in the Sudanese civil war and for oil profits to be placed in a trust fund where they couldn't be used to arm the government. Finally, the groups agreed to shift their lobbying effort from the State Department to the president himself.

Their first opportunity to employ this pressure

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will come on Nov. 4, at this year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. The event will be simulcast to Christian radio stations across the country. The major networks, as well as the president, have been invited to attend. Not coincidentally, the event will be held in Bush's hometown of Midland, Texas.

In a Free State

This is not the first time Christian conservatives have found themselves frustrated by terrorism and their own politics. In 1998, President Clinton launched cruise missiles at Sudan in retaliation for bin Laden's bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. "At that time I thought we'd reached critical mass," Horowitz says, "until Clinton bombed Sudan. After that, any criticism of Khartoum on our part would have looked like 'wag the dog' support of Clinton. It set our movement back at least a year."

In addition to its right-wing ideology, what's prevented the Christian persecution movement from becoming a bigger force in American politics—even in conservative circles—has been the average American's general lack of interest in foreign policy. That problem disappeared on the morning of September 11. Furthermore, the attack confers a new significance on the issue of religious persecution, especially in fundamentalist Islamic states. In the weeks since the attack, Bush repeated to American voters and Muslims worldwide that this is not a religious war. But more and more observers, especially conservatives, aren't buying it. ("This is a Religious War," screamed the headline of an essay by conservative writer Andrew Sullivan in *The New York Times Magazine* last month.)

The Christian solidarity movement is on its way to becoming a powerful vehicle for this line of thinking—a nightmare scenario for an administration desperately trying to include Muslims in an anti-terrorist coalition. Unlike human rights groups on the left, which don't have a broad popular base, Christian solidarity can draw on an army of foot soldiers from places like Grace Bible Church. It is not hard to imagine tens of thousands of Christians amassing on the Mall to denounce the administration's outreach to repressive Muslim states.

The Christian solidarity movement could be even more formidable were it to join forces with human rights groups on the left. Last year, a left-right alliance forced the passage of a Third World debt relief bill through a Republican Congress normally hostile to such causes. And it was the Christian right's partnership with black groups that forced the Bush administration to address Sudan. Such an alliance almost occurred last month over American foreign policy. A group of liberal human rights organizations sought Christian solidarity leaders' support for a declaration condemning the administration for ignoring human rights in its war against terrorism. The Christian groups declined because liberals rejected language that characterized the September 11 attackers as "terrorists" (they insisted on "perpetrators"). Despite the setback, common goals and the recent history of cooperation suggest that an eventual foreign policy alliance may be inevitable.

Such an alliance could significantly undermine support for Bush's war strategy. But that could be a good thing, since the strategy needs some rethinking. The administration has declared that states such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and even Sudan are "cooperating" with the fight against terrorism for sharing intelligence data and agreeing to end ongoing sponsorship of terrorism. Though it may be necessary in a time of war for the U.S. to sympathize with the internal pressures in these regimes, the price of compromise needn't include millions more innocent lives. "Cooperating" with the U.S. should also include an easing of religious and political oppression.

The reason is simple. Terrorism and religious fanaticism fester in these countries in part because repressive regimes limit political dissent to the Mosque. As *Newsweek*'s Fareed Zakaria has noted, Arab countries such as Jordan, Morocco, Oman, and Qatar, produce fewer terrorists and less fanaticism because their governments, though hardly democratic, "have opened up a little political and civil space and tried to show that Islam is compatible with modernity." A commitment by the Bush administration to ending religious persecution might push long-time allies like Saudi Arabia and Egypt to follow suit and perhaps improve our image in the Muslim world.

Such an effort isn't incompatible with the pressing need to fight terrorism. President Clinton pushed hard for closer economic ties to China. But thanks in part to pressure from liberal human rights groups, during his visit to China he spoke openly about U.S. opposition to the government's mistreatment of religious minorities, including Christians. Bush should strive to be similarly outspoken—more so, in fact—with our Islamic allies in the Middle East. Demanding human rights concessions from regimes like Sudan isn't inconsistent with Bush's moral justification for war. On the contrary, it reinforces his very point. If pressure from religious conservatives and other human rights organizations bring about this realization, they'll be doing America's war effort a great service.

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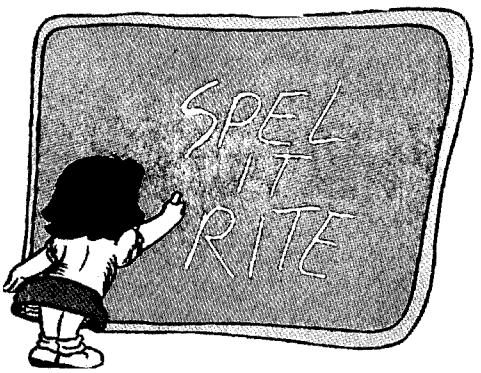
Tidbits & Outrages



A Foreign Relation?

In the wake of the attack, the mayor of a small Mexican town sent President Bush a letter urging him not to bomb *"Apatzingan."* Informed that "Afghanistan" was the country in peril, the mayor was not dissuaded. "I did send it off," he said. "Just in case."

Aggressive Fiscal Policy

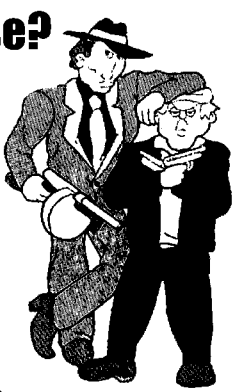
Texas Senator Phil Gramm killed a bill banning foreign banks from U.S. financial markets if they didn't cooperate with money laundering investigations. Gramm called the bill "totalitarian" and added, "The way to deal with terrorists is to hunt them down and kill them."

BUSH MAY BE THE GREAT SATAN, BUT AT LEAST HE'S NO CLINTON

"Clinton is a bad person and a confessed sinner. It is absolutely not possible to negotiate with such a person and he should be removed from power and stoned to death."

—Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar

An offer he can't refuse?



An alleged member of the Gambino crime family, jailed since March 2000, offered New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani use of a $6 million steel-shredding machine to help with the World Trade Center cleanup. "This is a real offer," his attorney said. "I hope the mayor takes it seriously."

McDonald's drive-thru is the real plum

"The sad news is our screeners look at going to work at Cinnabon as a promotion."

—Georgia Senator Max Cleland on the low regard airport baggage screeners have for their job.

Brain Freeze

Alaska Representative Don Young, an avowed enemy of environmentalists, suggested that the World Trade Center attack may have been the work of "eco-terrorists."

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When Rubbers Hit The Road

HIV infection among gay men is on the rise. This time, it will take more than condoms to stop it.

BY ANDREW WEBB

FIRST THING MOST MORNINGS, WHILE it's still dark, before I swing my legs out of bed to get ready for the gym, I reach for the phone and call one of the many dial-a-boy phone chat services that cater to gay men. On these lines, I leave a message describing myself and what I'm looking for, and then listen to others' messages. If I hear one I like, I can send the originator a private message or initiate an online chat with him. Judging from the number of other men accessible on these lines, there are a lot of gay men who are looking for sex, titillation, or (like me, most times) just the chance to hear another man's voice as a balm to loneliness before getting up.

Most of the men who call say they do it because they're feeling a little randy. But if that were the only reason for calling—given the time or the money involved—it would be smarter to take the Joycelyn Elders approach to lust and avoid the hassles and cost. No, my guess is that despite denials, most of these guys are as lonesome as I am and want not only the eroticism which goes with sex, but the human contact, if only for a few minutes or hours.

Alas, this loneliness sometimes leads me, and I suspect many others, to take risks I know I shouldn't take. By this I mean having unprotected anal intercourse. I'm not proud to admit that the last time I did this was just last month.

My excuse? I don't have one.

For two years, I actually lived with an HIV diagnosis, and then was granted a reprieve: I wasn't HIV positive after all. (The county health department, apparently, had given me someone else's results.) During those two years and the four that followed, when I worked for an HIV study run by the University of California, I gave dozens of talks about HIV's causes and effects, read mountains of literature, talked with experts on HIV, and became extremely knowledgeable.

When I go in for my irregularly timed HIV antibody tests, public health workers tell me multiple sex partners and unprotected anal sex are the surest routes to HIV infection. "It only takes once," they caution. They know I know that. Yet occasionally—only a dozen or so times in over 15 years—I still slip. In retrospect, I see that the public health community's message, focused almost solely on encouraging condom usage, was bound to fail over time, and that my (and others') slipping into unsafe sex practices, however rare, was inevitable.

There have always been gay men who refused to practice safer sex, but between the advent of AIDS and

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the late 1990s, barebacking—anal sex without a condom—was mostly practiced on the fringes of gay society. Plenty of evidence suggests, however, that over the last few years barebacking has become common, if not *de rigueur*, among gay men in general.

Certainly, the advent of new drug treatments has contributed to this trend, as has the loneliness that seems inherent in gay life. But those factors don't explain everything. Also driving the increase in barebacking is the peculiarly amoral nature of the dominant gay culture, which springs from a well-articulated ideology that views unfettered sex as the defining feature of gay identity. As a result, heading off the next AIDS epidemic will take a lot more than free condoms and stern lectures from well-meaning health officials.

Condoms have been a poor substitute for what serves as a check on promiscuity among straight people: morality.

In June, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released preliminary data from a seven-year, seven-city study of 15- to 22-year-old gay men that showed an alarmingly high incidence of unprotected anal sex—41 percent of respondents. CDC researchers have also found disturbing increases in the percentage of men under 25 reporting multiple sex partners, and of men having unprotected sex with multiple partners who don't even know whether their partners are infected. Researchers estimate that the increase in unprotected sex among gay men is rising exponentially: 50 percent in the last two years.

The effects are already apparent. The estimated number of new adult-adolescent AIDS cases diagnosed in the United States sharply decreased between 1996 and 1998, thanks to a concerted public health effort. But those gains have almost ground to a halt. The estimated number of new AIDS cases decreased by only one percent between 1998 and 1999.

There's reason to believe that gay men, and not intravenous drug users or other high-risk groups, are driving this change. In 1999, San Francisco researchers reviewed the results from about 9,000 people who had been tested in area clinics. Among the most recent infections, not a single woman who was tested turned up positive, nor did any IV drug users—except those who were gay. Those with new infections were gay men, mostly white, and in their thirties.

Clearly, the fear mongering that was public health officials' primary weapon against HIV infection for most of the 1990s is no longer working. It's no surprise, really. After all, condoms may offer protection against disease, but they hardly protect against the other things that drive us toward risky behavior—like loneliness, a simple human emotion that gay men probably understand better than most, and the one thing that usually prompts my own lapses.

For most gay men, sex has *never* been safe and often still isn't. Condoms or no, in almost half the states, consensual sex between two men remains a criminal offense. Relationships? Because there are no societal sanctions, most gay male relationships are a joke and rarely monogamous. It's easier to snatch a bit of intimacy with someone you meet in a bar or via a phone line or Internet chat room and call it a day. Even among the most openly gay men, the strain of managing a normal life in the face of systemic and judicially validated social exclusion often induces drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and excessive promiscuity—all of which contribute to the risky behavior that can lead to HIV infection.

At the same time, condoms have been a poor substitute for what serves as a check on promiscuity among straight people: morality. With all gay sex deemed immoral, gay men have no language for defining what's acceptable sexual behavior and what isn't, and no social consequences for violating those norms to help shore up their willpower. Without recognizing these complicating factors in gay sexuality, public health officials' simple exhortations for safer sex will likely fail at a tremendous cost, both in human lives lost and in the public expense of caring for a new generation of HIV's victims.

Bathhouse Rules

At the turn of the 20th century, a German scientist discovered that healthy people could carry the typhoid bacteria for years, spreading it around

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and making other people sick without realizing it. As a result, during a subsequent outbreak of typhoid in New York City, an ambitious city public health official tracked the source of the infection to Mary Mallon, an Irish immigrant who worked as a professional cook. The health department incarcerated her on an island in the East River until she promised to find different work.

But under a pseudonym, Mallon sneaked back into a kitchen. When officials traced more infections back to her, and she refused to cooperate with their infection-control efforts, the health director sent her back to the island for the rest of her life, where she became the famous Typhoid Mary. While that might seem extreme by today's standards, similar efforts to track down, treat, and contain the infectious steadily reduced death rates. Had that practice been employed early on, the spread of HIV might have been checked.

But politics made such measures nearly impossible. Gay activists fought efforts to allow public officials access to the names of infected people for contact tracing. All testing was done anonymously. Their arguments were compelling enough: the stigma of AIDS was such that inadvertent disclosure could cost people their jobs, housing, and even result in family breakups, especially when the sick person was still closeted or married. Health officials feared mandatory testing would also drive underground the very men most at risk of testing positive. At the same time, gay men resisted such efforts as closing gay sex clubs (euphemistically known as bathhouses) and other venues where transmission of HIV flourished. Their argument: The government had no right to impinge on individual sexual freedoms. With the religious right generating hysteria and demanding that all gays be branded or quarantined, suggesting a "Typhoid Mary" strategy was out of the question lest it be taken to extremes.

Even in the face of such hurdles, the public health system rose to the occasion—supplemented by many private organizations—by focusing on public education with a message consistent with knowledge of the disease. The condom code (i.e. "Use a condom ... every time") was at the heart of that message, and for a number of years it worked. HIV infection rates among gay white males took a dramatic downward turn in the late 1980s.

But the arrival in the mid-'90s of antiretroviral drugs and other effective HIV treatments created new problems for public health officials. By 1999, no longer were huge numbers of men dying of "AIDS complications." And advertising aimed at gay men, depicting healthy, hunky models (black and white) engaged in strenuous activities, further minimized the risks of HIV. To young men coming into the world of gay sex then (and now), HIV and AIDS were things old guys got. It didn't affect them. Without the fear of imminent death hanging over them, men let their guard down, relaxed their vigilance in complying with the old condom code.

HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) also created another problem for public health officials: Normally, even without public health interventions, most disease epidemics eventually burn themselves out (at great human cost, of course), either by killing off most of those who might spread the disease, or leaving enough people with immunity that the bug loses its potency. Thanks to the advent of new drugs, HIV is one of the rare, fatal infectious diseases that can now exist in people who are largely healthy, potentially creating thousands of Typhoid Marys to keep the virus alive and kicking in new victims.

The dangers of this situation shouldn't be underestimated. HIV is an amazingly clever virus, capable of mutating to escape the new drugs. As the virus mutates, it limits the treatment options, leaving open the possibility of successive waves of untreatable illness. Even the 50 percent of HIV-positive people who respond to the new drugs run the risk of acquiring one of these drug-resistant strains if they continue to eschew condoms, as many apparently are. Already the costs are mounting: Treating drug-resistant HIV can cost $60,000 per year, per person, and it is only a matter of time before the death toll begins to mount once more as the drugs fail to save us.

Boys Will Be Boys

Clearly, medical advances can only go so far in saving lives from HIV. That means that gay men are going to have to change their behavior if they are going to avoid another replay of the funeral-a-day '80s and early '90s. So far, though, few people—gay or otherwise—are calling for such change.

While some individual conservatives may be developing a quiet tolerance of gays (see Dick Cheney), the conservative movement makes gays feel unwelcome and even hated in a thousand ways, including supporting political and religious leaders who are openly bigoted. Its pattern of reaction is unlikely to bring about gay men's necessary behavioral modification. And liberals turn deferential, adopting a boys-will-be-boys attitude when told of

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various gay male sexual practices. Both camps, it seems, believe that when a man has consensual sex with another man and gets infected, it's his own damn fault. (I admit I lean in this direction, and have long accepted that if I were to become infected, it would be no one's responsibility but my own.) But it's too facile to say the disease is its own punishment, and that society at large bears no responsibility for its social consequences.

Compare the way we treat gay men who spread HIV with the public reaction to Nushawn Williams, the 20-year-old black man in upstate New York who was prosecuted for infecting 10 young women. Rightly or wrongly, state officials decided that Williams was a public health hazard, and took an aggressive approach to preventing him from spreading the disease any further. They tracked down all of his sexual partners (there were 48), tested and treated them. They put his name, photo, and HIV status on posters all over town to warn potential intimates; CNN and other national news outlets got in on the story. And prosecutors brought enough assault charges against him to potentially put him away for life. (He got four to 12 years.)

Yet what Williams did seems almost mild in comparison to what goes on in gay culture, which features sex parties at which condoms and talk of HIV are prohibited. True, Williams's partners were willing (or willfully ignorant of his HIV status). But state officials decided that the lives of his potential female partners were worth protecting from any lapses in judgment. Gay men who engage in unprotected anal intercourse, though, are on their own. The laws making the willful transmission of HIV a crime have almost solely been applied to straight men who infected women.

That we don't sanction gay men who behave irresponsibly is a sign—one of many—that for all the progress made in gay rights in the past decade, straight people still don't see gays as part of respectable society. Of course, mainstream society has legally set gay people apart as a class at least since the end of World War II, if not longer. The government has persecuted gays, kicked them out of government jobs during the red scares of the '50s, deported legal gay immigrants, thrown them out of the military, and allowed blatant discrimination in housing and employment. (I, myself, was fired in 1984 from a job as an intelligence analyst at the National Security Agency.) In states that still have laws against consensual sodomy, the courts have even ruled that men can legally be arrested for asking another man out for a date! And that list doesn't even include the private abuse, the familial rejection, and risk of physical violence which gay people live under.

Because mainstream society has set them apart (morally, philosophically, culturally, physically), gay people have developed their own vaguely defined morality and ethics. This alternative, sometimes-perverse morality, I believe, underlies the current barebacking trend. And because that alternative morality (or amorality) was created in response to ostracism from mainstream society, society as a whole—conservatives and liberals alike—bear some responsibility for the rise in unsafe sex.

Zack the Knife

While researching this subject, I spent over 20 hours interviewing men (both HIV positive and negative) who admitted to regular barebacking. Because they were afraid of the stigma and legal consequences their behaviors engender, many refused to meet in person or even talk on the phone. As a result, I interviewed them all in real time via private Internet chat rooms. Almost none had ever thought about the moral ramifications of his acts. In almost all cases, these men (ranging in age from 19 to 53) seemed to feel no sense of responsibility for their actions toward others.

One of these men said he preferred his partners to be HIV negative because of the psychic thrill he got from knowing he might infect them. In addition, he said, he prefers that his sexual partner not know he is HIV positive; he gets a kick out of possibly infecting someone who doesn't know he's getting infected. "I think it's a power thing," 19-year-old Zach told me. "Normally, I like to be the one who is totally dominated, but when I'm topping a guy I like to know that what I'm doing is changing his life, especially if he doesn't want it to be."

There's not much difference between Zach and any other run-of-the-mill killer. He knows full well what he's doing. Yet many gay men (if my interviews are representative) would do nothing to stop men like Zack from infecting others.

These attitudes reflect the growth of an extremely vocal minority within the homosexual culture. It holds that sexual license (which its members call sexual liberation) is the defining characteristic of homosexuality. People like Michael Warner (an English professor at Rutgers) and Judith Butler (professor of rhetoric and comparative literature at Berkeley) recoil in horror at the merest suggestion by many promi-

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nent gay activists and writers—including Michelangelo Signorile, Gabriel Rotello, Larry Kramer, and Andrew Sullivan—that gay men should rein in their sexual appetites and adopt the heterosexual paradigm of coupled monogamy, if for no other reason than to curb the spread of STDs. They see any such talk as tantamount to forcing gay people to become pale imitations of straights. To them, being gay is being a sexual libertine—damn the consequences. They've even formed a group, Sex Panic, to promote their viewpoint.

As conservative gadfly David Horowitz observed in Salon.com, "Any acknowledgment of 'normality' [by Warner, et. al] would suggest that the promotion of promiscuous sex in the midst of the AIDS epidemic is perverse at best and accessory to murder at worst. If heterosexuals were defending gay sex clubs in the face of the AIDS epidemic, their motives would be properly suspect. Still, their silence...lends a quiet support to this intellectual fascism and sexual fanaticism that diminishes the prospects of survival for America's gay men."

After all, how can we ask gay men to respect the well-being of larger society if we don't ask mainstream society to respect the health of gay men?

Tough Love

Any new efforts to slow the spread of HIV, particularly among gay men, must be multifaceted and nuanced, taking into account the unique characteristics of gay culture. While the condom code was based on individual fear and safer sex, these new strategies must emphasize *responsible* sex and demand that gay men consider the effect of their actions on the well-being of larger society, not just on themselves. Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, director of Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention and Control Services in San Francisco, has suggested a number of measures, some coercive,which he thinks would slow the increase of new HIV infections among gay men. Among them: closing sex clubs and adult bookstores, enforcing no-sex ordinances in bars and clubs; enforcing no-drug policies in bars and clubs; and Internet-based outreach and education, particularly in chat rooms where many gay men meet new sexual partners.

Putting aside political realities when brainstorming on this subject, Klausner also raised the possibility of quarantining those who cannot control their infectivity—e.g., those barebackers who've infected 20 different people and still refuse to use condoms. Many of these measures would probably be infeasible in the current political climate. Still, this doesn't mean they shouldn't be discussed. After all, in an environment where there are no consequences for actions that threaten the public health, it may be necessary to create some.

I believe, too, that a balance could be struck between effective public health measures and civil rights. And nearly 20 years into the epidemic, the gay rights movement might just have matured enough to make a reasonable discussion of such measures possible. After all, we've long accepted the need in certain circumstances for quarantining tuberculosis patients and recently began forcing some recalcitrant tuberculosis-infected individuals to take their medications under supervision. Likewise, contact reporting and tracing has long been the means of limiting the damage (to individuals and the public at large) from other sexually transmitted diseases. And if this is a public health issue–why, in the 17 states where willful transmission of HIV is a crime, is informing the uninfected partner ahead of time usually a defense against conviction?

Ultimately, though, HIV prevention efforts will not take root until mainstream society welcomes gays into the fold. After all, how can we ask gay men to respect the well-being of larger society if we don't ask mainstream society to respect the health of gay men? Legalization of same-sex marriage, domestic partnership benefits, and other measures that would allow gays to have culturally supported, monogamous relationships, would go a long way towards curtailing excessive promiscuity, not to mention protecting the public health. At the same time, homosexuals must be held to the same legal, moral, and cultural standards applied to heterosexuals both in and out of committed relationships. Given that the direct and indirect costs of not dealing with rising infection rates will be huge, what choice is there?

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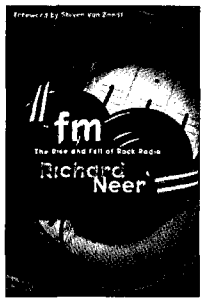
Don't Touch That Dial

Why FM radio sucks.

BY FRANK AHRENS

FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, ROCK RADIO today is infuriating. You bounce back and forth between alternative rock stations that repeat the same derivative grunge-rap, kiddy-pop stations transfixed by 'N Sync, and classic rock station cranking out painfully overplayed Stones and Bachman-Turner Overdrive cuts. The alternatives are too horrible to contemplate, so you switch to NPR or pop in a CD.

It wasn't always this bad. As recently as a few years ago, on at least *some* alternative rock stations in *some* cities, there was a decent shot you'd hear the latest Nirvana, Beck, and New Order. There have been earlier periods when rock radio shone, too. Around 1983, bands like the Talking Heads, the B-52s, the Psychedelic Furs, and even a little Gang of Four and Mission of Burma made it onto the airwaves. And, of course, there were the venerated days of "free-form" or "progressive" rock radio in the late 1960s when both the music and the radio stations were REALLY terrific, if your chronic-clouded memory serves you. What happened to rock radio? Has it been maliciously murdered by corporations and consultants? Did it die of starvation, as rock music nearly did in the crush of the '90s black artist juggernaut? Or did it OD on its own mainlined pretension and self-segregation? Did rock radio commit suicide?



FM:
The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio
by Richard Neer
Villard Books, $24.95

It's hard to believe now, but FM rock was once so cool, they made a whole movie about it. In 1978's *FM*, Los Angeles rocker Q-SKY is the top-rated station in town because the deejays play the music they like. Enter Evil Corporate Boss, who wants more advertising, less music. Struggle for soul of station ensues. A fine soundtrack issued forth, including the title track by Steely Dan, a valentine to a radio bandwidth: "FM (No Static at All)." The movie *FM* became something of a metaphor for what happened to the prog-rock FMers of the glory days. The little bud of cool was discovered, deemed valuable, commodified by The Man, and extinguished in its original form. It's said that America avoids revolutions by absorbing them. This is exactly what happened to cutting-edge FM radio some three decades ago.

The history of FM rock radio is a good tale, encompassing issues of taste, politics, culture, and the central question: Whose radio station is it, anyway? Richard Neer, a longtime free-form deejay, has

FRANK AHRENS *covered the radio industry for three years for* The Washington Post's *Style section. He now covers the business of media, entertainment, and advertising for the* Post's *Business section.*

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taken a stab at answering some of these questions in his history of radio, *FM: The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio*. Unfortunately, Neer's take on this worthy topic is as rambling and incoherent as an old free-former's airshift. But two interesting truths can be gleaned from his book: The early days of rock radio weren't nearly as admirable as we might remember them, and the corporate interests that now control radio aren't necessarily to blame for the low quality of what passes for rock radio today.

Sex, Drugs and FM Radio

On today's radio dial, AM stations are strictly second-class citizens. Ruled by Rush Limbaugh and Dr. Laura, AM is the province of talk shows, sports, staticky ethnic music and the jeremiads of overnight wackos. Thirty-five years ago, the opposite was true. Powerhouse stations like WOR and WABC in New York were found on the AM dial. The jocks—men like Cousin Brucie Morrow—were stars. They had machine-gun mike styles and tight, tight playlists, more Top 20 than Top 40. By contrast, FM was a throwaway bandwidth. What's more, the FM morning-drive deejay shift—by far the highest-paying, most profitable time slot at any station today—was the least important because practically nobody had FM receivers in their cars. (Amazing, yet true.)

On today's radio dial, AM stations are strictly second-class citizens, the province of talk shows, sports, staticky ethnic music and the jeremiads of overnight wackos. Thirty-five years ago, the opposite was true.

In *FM*, Neer tells a fascinating story about a fellow called Edward Armstrong, who discovered and promoted FM radio in the 1930s. He instantly realized how much better it sounded than tinny AM. Yet, the big radio companies of the day were heavily invested in producing and marketing AM receivers, and threw up numerous roadblocks. Driven to despair by bad luck and corporate treachery, Armstrong came to believe that his life and work were failures and, in 1954, he composed an apology to his wife and leaped to his death from a 13th-floor window.

But at isolated FM stations like KFOG in San Francisco, WXRT in Chicago, and what later became the Mecca of them all, New York's WNEW, FM's stock was slowly rising. At these stations, ownership tolerated experimentation—what was there to lose? WNEW was one of the first to abandon the rigid Top-40 format and embrace what those nutty kids were listening to. Big-voiced, relentlessly cheery, airhead AM jocks were replaced by cerebral deejays who talked to listeners about politics and philosophy. They read poems and polemicized about the civil rights movement and played whatever they wanted. Jocks mixed Miles Davis with Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix with James Taylor. They flaunted their encyclopedic musical knowledge. When it worked, it was groundbreaking. When it didn't (which was frequently) it was tedious and tyrannical.

Neer worked at WNEW from 1971 to 1999. Though he lived through its glory days, it would be accurate to say that his seat at the revolution was Standing Room Only—he was there when it all happened, but trapped somewhere near the back. Because, while *FM* contains a few dollops of amusing and illuminating stories, they're usually happening to someone else. For instance, legendary WNEW deejay Scott Muni once conducted an on-air interview with a very drunk Elton John, who insisted on playing deejay. (When? Possibly the '80s; Neer doesn't tell us.) John read a carefully worded commercial for the Pink Pussycat Boutique, a New York sex shop, crafted to avoid an FCC indecency fine. But the glam-rocker ad-libbed: "Do you like to rim your boyfriend? Or do you just like to eat pussy? So if you're the world's biggest faggot, or you just like to fuck, visit the Pink Pussycat Boutique." Terrific stuff. The book cries for more.

As Neer's colleagues cavort with rock stars, negotiate big paychecks, and reign like gods over the counter-culture radio intelligentsia, you start to feel sorry for him. Neer finally gets his turn when he's the first American deejay to play Monty Python comedy records. But after scoring an interview, he manages only to coax a "not very funny" Q & A from the hilarious Brits. Afterwards, it's back to the

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sideline. It's as though a history of the American Revolution was written not by Washington or his chief of staff, but by the second-soldier-from-the-right in Washington's rear guard. For this method to work, the narrator must be funny or insightful. Neer is neither. Worse, he's a lousy writer. Neer opines: "As the Eagles put it, 'We are all just prisoners here, of our own device.'" Ugh.

The real problem is that Neer is too gracious to his former colleagues—he commits the cardinal sin of penning a tell-some, not a tell-all. Neer's either unwilling or unable to dish dirt. At one point, he piques our interest by telling us, "Jocks were doing coke while on the air on a regular basis." But two sentences later, Neer betrays his hopeless square-dom: "Never having been a part of the drug culture ... " Sigh. *FM* is crammed with similar copouts, so much so that you'll want to hurl it against a wall.

Jerk Jocks

Despite himself, Neer provides enough telling detail to show how free-form FM self-immolated. The most important point in the book, one that Neer nails, is that free-form radio's self-righteousness killed it, perhaps deservedly. "These jocks were interested in self-expression, which often translated into self-indulgence," he writes. "It's the elitist attitude that, 'I know better than the marketplace. I know what's good, the great unwashed public doesn't.'" As that passage suggests, deejays lorded over set lists as if they were works of art. The seamless segue from one song to the next was considered a transcendent moment of sublime ecstasy. Jocks wanted only to educated listeners to their own tastes—in other words, a lot of these guys sounded less like jocks and more like jerks.

Not surprisingly, free-form FM rock stations didn't draw big ratings. In New York, a major AM station could get a 20 share (meaning that among radio listeners, 20 percent were tuned in). Today, program directors get Cancun vacations if they grab a nine share. Even at its apex, WNEW never topped a five share. But it was enough to draw the interest of the money men. *Say*, they thought to themselves, *if we took the edge off this station, reined in the jocks and established a playlist, this thing might actually take off!*

And it did. On the West Coast around 1967, two consultants, Bill Drake and Gene Chenault, dreamed up "Boss radio." Boss took the hip new rock music championed by the free-formers and established "rotations"—hot new songs played several times an hour, interspersed with cuts rising or falling on the charts, as well as some deejay-derived "deep cuts" from albums. Deejay freedom was tightly curtailed. The patter was cut back. And when Boss jocks spoke, they did so with the balls-out *basso profundo* typical of today's classic rock stations: "Comin' up next: Time to get the Led out!"

Boss radio spread to the East Coast and a new generation of consultants. Men like Lee Abrams and Michael Harrison, who once free-formed on WNEW, sought a middle ground between soulless Top 40 AM pop and self-indulgent prog-rock FM. They hit upon a shocking idea. They decided to find out what the listeners wanted to hear, and in the process, ushered in today's corporate radio. By identifying and capturing a specific group of listeners—say, females age 18-to-34 in the market for a new car and still forming their soft-drink allegiance—they discovered they could sell *that* to advertisers.

The Last Imperial Deejays

What all this means is that radio has undergone a dynamic political evolution over the last three decades. If the free-formers of 30 years ago set up monarchic-anarchic states in which imperial deejays spun what they pleased, today's commercial radio is a mob-rule democracy. Neither system offers something for everyone.

The sad truth about modern radio is that it's not—repeat *not*—about playing music or talk that listeners like to hear. Radio is about promising discrete audiences to advertisers—it's an advertising-delivery vehicle. The truth is that most radio listeners don't want to hear songs they don't recognize or that haven't been sufficiently hyped. Only what researchers call "sophisticated" listeners are into music experimentation—and they don't comprise a big enough demographic to merit many radio stations of their own. (One example is the Adult Album Alternative (AAA) format that plays "safe" music skewed at tasteful adults—Billy Bragg, Son Volt, and David Gray—radio for folks who grew up on Elvis Costello.) In fact, when radio researchers perform what they refer to as "call-outs," they play seconds-long snippets of songs and simply ask listeners if they recognize them. Sometimes they don't even solicit a value judgment.

Ever since the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 opened the door to consolidation, more and more privately owned radio stations are being snapped up by large, publicly traded companies con-

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trolled by Wall Street shareholders. As a result, only the "money demographics" get radio stations aimed at them. This is why you hear so much rap and R&B, Top 40, country and "adult mixes" of Sting and Gwen Stefani. Niche formats simply don't make enough money to survive. In Washington, D.C., the nation's seventh-largest radio market, the following niche formats have been killed in the last few years: nostalgia/standards, showtunes, rhythmic oldies, and opera. Public radio, ever in search of larger, pledge-generating audiences, has done the same, killing chamber and choral music and almost all bluegrass.

FM radio won't ever be what it once was. The $150-million radio stations are simply too valuable to be lab rats for experiment-minded music directors. Furthermore, as rock music continues its death spiral, more and more FM rock stations are turning to the ever-profitable "hot talk" format. Hosts like Howard Stern and Opie and Anthony peddle their horny, quasi-racist, often xenophobic schtick to the young, unsophisticated males who used to be the province of rock radio. The watershed moment of *FM* came in 1999, when Neer's hallowed WNEW dropped rock for talk. It broke his heart.

There's a case to be made that rock radio developed anemia because the music itself got sick. Today's rock is dominated by whiners and no-talent mooks. For every Green Day, you get a dozen Blink 182s and Limp Bizkits. Geriatrics like Aerosmith crank out monotonous albums, but seem to be servicing an art form that's about as vital as the Latin language.

The New Free-Formers

So let me make a recommendation: When I got tired of punching around the radio dial a few years ago looking for good rock, I started listening to stations I'd always skipped over. It was here that I found the best stuff on FM radio today: the black-hits stations. Post-rap singers like Nelly, DMX, and Destiny's Child produce the catchiest, richest-sounding music being made. Mix-deejays at these stations create new versions of popular songs and craft long music sets with the artistry of the old free-formers. These deejays are also the strongest personalities on radio today because they connect with their audiences, navigating the lexicon and providing a kind of authenticity absent since, well, the days of the old prog-rock FMers. Just look at the numbers: Album sales and concert revenue from these artists dwarf their predominantly white-rock counterparts. And in most large cities, like Washington, the black-hits radio stations are top rated.

If the free-formers of 30 years ago set up monarchic-anarchic states where imperial deejays spun what they pleased, today's commercial radio is a mob-rule democracy.

For hardcore rockers who believe that someone out there may still find a new way to combine three chords, or for those who just miss the old days, good news is on the horizon: satellite radio. By December, a company called XM will blanket the country with its subscription radio service. For the price of a $400 radio to receive the signal and a $10 per-month fee, XM will beam 100 channels of music, news, and entertainment to your car through a tiny satellite antenna affixed to the roof. Instead of one classic rock station, you'll get four, broken out by decade and genre. You'll get a channel of unsigned bands and others for classic country, '40s Big Band, bluegrass and folk, disco, trance, hard rock, and acoustic. XM and rival Sirius (which debuts next year) ape the hyper-successful business model of cable television, believing that people will pay for "free TV" if it gives them the narrowcasting they desire.

To maintain their listeners, regular radio stations are spending millions to convert their analog signals to digital in hopes of improving sound quality. Their pitch is that AM will sound like FM, and FM like CDs. I've tried this technology on FM stations and the difference is palpable. All of this could, of course, lead to the ultimate irony. If AM ends up sounding as good as FM, it could herald the return of music to the AM bandwidth. After all, lots of today's AMs are just like yesterday's FMs—undervalued, low-budget places where a station owner just may give a creative deejay and program director license to experiment. We can dream, can't we?

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Broken-Fingernail Feminism

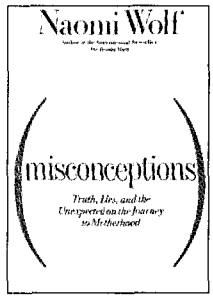
Educated women claim to hate Naomi Wolf. So why do they read her books?

BY STEPHANIE MENCIMER

FEMINISTS HAVE RARELY GIVEN US MUCH to envy. They often come to the picket line with disastrous personal lives—divorces, a history of sexual abuse, or domestic violence—or simply no personal life at all. The perception anyway is that public feminists all resemble Hillary Clinton in those old law-school photos, where her unpainted face is masked with gigantic Coke-bottle glasses and a mousy mop of hair that screams of frumpiness, and that these women have sacrificed beauty, sex, children, and material comforts for the cause.

Then there's Naomi Wolf. Indisputably beautiful and confidently so, the Rhodes scholar published her first best-seller at age 28, inspired the "Third Wave" feminist movement, became a staple on the college lecture circuit, and went on to counsel the president (and a would-be president) on the zeitgeist of the day. Her success extends to her personal life: Wolf has the perfect husband, former Clinton speechwriter and current *New York Times* editor David Shipley, and two presumably beautiful children. And, of course, she is rich. (In 1999, she claimed she took a pay cut to work for Al Gore's campaign at $15,000 a month.)

Yet despite her success, Wolf is deeply loathed by, well, just about everyone who has ever seen her book-jacket glamour shots. Camille Paglia has derided Wolf as the "yuppie feminist" and "the Dan Quayle of feminism—a pretty airhead who has gotten any profile whatsoever because of her hair," and even Betty Friedan has dismissed her for largely ignoring the more pressing social issues of the day.



MISCONCEPTIONS:
Truth, Lies, and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood
by Naomi Wolf
Doubleday, $24.95

In smarty-pants Washington circles, Wolf-bashing is a local pastime—even when most critics have never read any of her books. When word got out during the last presidential campaign that Wolf had been counseling Al Gore to be more "alpha-male," you could hear the pundits gleefully sharpening their knives. The Establishment immediately disparaged her as a purveyor of psychobabble (quoting embarrassingly from Wolf's book *Promiscuities*, in which she proclaimed, "I want to explore the shadow slut who walks alongside us as we grow up, sometimes jeopardizing us and sometimes presenting us with a new sense of authentic identity").

Yet when Wolf's new book, *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies, and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood*, hit the shelves in late September, all over Washington, smart women and their shadow sluts were observed secretly running out to get a copy—undeterred even by Arab Kamikazes.

What is it about Wolf that people find so annoying, and yet so absorbing that they continue to take her seriously? There's something contradictory about the undisputed leader of Gen X feminism. Wolf often seems like a women's magazine, full of earnest advice for the modern professional woman, but like *Cosmo* or *Glamour*, she is read by the female intelligentsia as a kind of a shameful treat and then immediately dismissed as a trivial pursuit. There's no doubt she's surpassed Gloria Steinem as the feminist we love to hate.

From her media platform, Wolf, 39, has promoted a feminist theory less concerned with abortion, rape, and other forms of victimization and instead more

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focused on the experiences of educated, middle-class women who love their husbands and are doing pretty well for themselves. Over the past decade, she has spelled out her vision in four books—*The Beauty Myth*, *Fire With Fire*, *Promiscuities*, and now, *Misconceptions*—that have mixed her own personal memoir with social criticism of some issues which even she acknowledges women are prone to dismiss as not especially important in the big scheme of things, such as dieting, body image, and sexual desire. And she has been savaged for it.

Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful

Various theories have been offered as to why Wolf provokes such strong feelings in people. The most common hypothesis is that Wolf is the pretty feminist in a world where feminists aren't supposed to be pretty. She really couldn't win on that front, given that her first book was *The Beauty Myth*. If she had been unattractive, the book would have been dismissed as sour grapes. If she was, as turned out to be the case, a bombshell who took to flipping her long hair around in photo shoots, she was simply proof of her thesis that our culture rewards beautiful women—and who could feel sorry for her about that?

Wolf does convey the sense that she's exploited her sexuality to get ahead in the world, but that hardly seems justification enough for the critics' harshness. At the same time, her widespread appeal probably does not stem from her track record as a visionary. Reading *The Beauty Myth* now, for instance, 10 years after its original publication (in 14 countries), it's clear the book hasn't aged well.

For instance, she writes, "In the 1980s it was evident that as women became more important, beauty too became more important. The closer women come to power, the more physical self-consciousness and sacrifice are asked of them ... older American women who have made advances within every profession are being forced to see the signs of age (the adjunct of male advancement) as a 'need' for plastic surgery." The arrival of Janet Reno as attorney general, and later, Madeleine Albright, made her analysis seem a bit overblown.

Wolf's obsession with anorexia also now seems rather misplaced, given the real epidemic that was taking off back then: obesity. Jennifer Aniston and friends may be starving themselves, but they don't represent large swaths of American women. Stroll around a college campus today and you're far more likely to see girls with their stomachs brazenly bulging over their hip-huggers than the "bones in Nikes" whom Wolf claimed were dropping like flies, and whom she compared to victims of the Holocaust. ("The experience of living in a severely anorexic body, even if that body is housed in an affluent suburb, is the experience of a body living in Bergen-Belsen").

The problem, of course, was that Wolf's analysis was based largely on her own experiences, which she posited as representative of women elsewhere, a flawed premise that explains much of the criticism directed against her. *The Beauty Myth*, for instance, seems to have grown out of what Wolf claims was her own case of anorexia in the 1970s, when she was 12 and started starving herself after a kid at the water fountain teased her about her weight ("I almost lost my life to anorexia," she once told a reporter.).

Conventional wisdom about eating disorders blames men for creating unrealistic expectations of beauty for women. Yet the many newspaper and magazine profiles done of Wolf over the past decade suggest that, as with most of us, at least some of her neuroses were shaped at home. Wolf was six when her father, a love-generation poet, was arrested for sponsoring a fundraiser later dubbed the "hippie nudist party," in which all the guests got naked. (When he was acquitted, Leonard Wolf had a party to celebrate that featured a poster of Cupid with fig leaves over his genitals, a scene Wolf claims to remember vividly.)

It stands to reason that growing up around naked hippies who also happen to be your parents might give a precocious young girl an unhealthy obsession with body image and sex. Instead, as has become her trademark, Wolf has created a dramatic meta-narrative out of

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her life and grafted it onto larger society. She has taken ordinary events—the universals of female experience—and written them like a Harlequin romance, imbuing each event with deeper symbolism and political meaning. The result is that Wolf seems sometimes like a sillier Sylvia Plath—self-obsessed and highly overwrought.

Crying Wolf

Wolf has a poet's melodramatic sensibility housed in a pundit's body. Where the poet finds allegory in a drop of rain, so, too, Wolf finds political symbolism in a dimpled thigh. And her sense of outrage is always fresh. In Promiscuities, she tells of a revered professor coming over to her apartment under the guise of discussing her poetry, only to stick his hands between her legs. Several of her classmates had had similar experiences with the codger, but Wolf somehow thought she could avoid that fate even while tempting it: "My whole body, my whole self-image, once again, again, burned with culpability," she writes. "It felt so familiar: this sense of being exposed as if in a slow-moving dream of shame. I could practically hear my own pulse: What had I done, done, done?" What indeed, indeed, indeed?

In Wolf's books, her innocence—and belief in women's progress—is always betrayed, an irritating feature for readers who suspect that the Rhodes scholar should be smart enough to know better. But then again, haven't we all been there? Even a decade after Anita Hill, what woman isn't taken aback when her job interview with a high-powered man turns into an invitation to room-service lunch at a hotel? The difference between Wolf and the rest of us is that few women like to publicly admit to being caught off guard when we should know better (as if it were somehow our fault, the eternal paradox of sexual harassment). So while the event itself may have been momentarily traumatic, we usually downplay its significance in the retelling and move on.

Wolf, on the other hand, takes these events and amps up, manufacturing a sense of melodrama that always seems out of proportion to the misery she's suffered. With her perfect hair and a personal life that Bridget Jones would die for, Wolf is like the perfect straight-A student from a nice family who's trying really hard to convince her less fortunate and wickedly envious classmates that her life has been a struggle, too. ("I got a 'B' in math!") You can hear that tone when she talks about being a Rhodes scholar—one of a handful of elite American students given the chance to study at Oxford. In 1991, Wolf told *Time* that she and the other women had been told by classmates that "we got our scholarships because we were cute." Oh, the horror!

Perhaps modern feminism so demands expression of personal victimization that Wolf feels compelled to inflate her minor bouts with injustice to epic proportions. Or perhaps the important lessons of feminism are simply a tough sell these days without a talk-show-tailored confessional. Ironically, the high drama Wolf gives to her personal history is very likely what makes her so appealing, especially to young women.

Wolf's writing makes her seem as if she would be every woman's ideal girlfriend. She'd listen intently to every detail of your tortured relationships and travails with your boss. She would sympathize, empathize, and take it all very seriously. In her books, she seizes those moments of great personal anguish in their fullness and makes a capital case out of them. As a result, she ends up bringing to bear the same breathless, righteous indignation to everything from the failures of high-school sex ed classes to female circumcision in Africa.

Wolf never acknowledges that in the heat of the moment, the crisis of our lousy boyfriend or lecherous professor may have seemed like the end of the world, but that later on, we gained some perspective. When the emotion cools, intellectually, we all know those moments pale in comparison to the real suffering endured by, say, our cleaning ladies. But again, elevating plastic surgery and our right to be sluts to the realm of "important political issues" may be the secret of Wolf's success. As much as we're embarrassed by it, hers is a feminism appropriate for our (until recently) self-obsessed times, highly individualistic and focused on personal development rather than collective action.

By recognizing ordinary female indignities and treating them with a poet's reverence, Wolf ends up framing sexism in a way that nearly every woman can identify with. When smart women claim to loathe Wolf, the venom may be a sign that Wolf knows us better than we'd like to admit. Deep down, we know what she's saying is mostly true, if perhaps embellished a bit in the telling. We did find the promises of sexual liberation a double-edged sword; we do obsess about our thighs; and while we'll profess to be deeply concerned about the plight of Hispanic domestic workers, we're far more likely to cry over being propositioned by our boss—and to sue him for it. The cleaning lady will have to make do with a Christmas bonus.

Creation Myths

Misconceptions, the third installment of Wolf's memoir trilogy, is probably the best of the bunch, if only because it offers a critique of bona fide "serious" issues. Unlike fading beauty, the desire for liposuction, or a slutty reputation, motherhood really is a huge barrier

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most women of all classes have trouble overcoming on the path to social and professional equity.

Following on the heels of Ann Crittenden's book *The Price of Motherhood*, Wolf offers the indignation of a Third-Wave feminist who has never suffered any serious obstacles because of her gender and who is shocked—shocked!—to learn upon having a child that the revolution has only gone so far.

Her starting point is the bible of American pregnant women: *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. She savages its platitudes, even as she admits to consulting it frequently for its weak assurances as she progresses through her first pregnancy. She finds the book patronizing and lacking in data to back up its supposedly reassuring assertions—such as that few women die in childbirth. As she learns later, lots of women do die in childbirth, but the numbers are underreported because there's no requirement for hospitals to report them, except in Massachusetts.

Wolf has a poet's melodramatic sensibility housed in a pundit's body. The result is that she sometimes seems like a sillier Sylvia Plath—self-obsessed and highly overwrought.

She finds equally troubling the lack of data available to her on C-sections and episiotomies—both of which take place in the U.S. at astonishing rates found in few other developed countries. Wolf criticizes the medical establishment, and the self-help industry, for assuming that women aren't to be trusted to eat right and take care of themselves. She finds that *Expecting* overloads on nutritional information and that it repeats the absurd absolute prohibition on alcohol, even though there's scant little evidence that a half a glass of wine is going to harm a baby.

Wolf reports some fascinating research on the uselessness of fetal monitors and their role in producing abominable C-section rates—nearly one in three births to middle-class women—yet she presents the information as if it were something startlingly new. In fact, the horrors of the fetal monitor have been the subject of debate and front-page newspaper stories for some 15 years. The information was all easily available to her in Jessica Mitford's 1992 book, *The American Way of Birth*, which you'd think she might have read before heading into the delivery room.

As with *Expecting*, Wolf found Lamaze classes mostly useless. After spending countless hours learning how to do "ladylike breathing exercises," she later learned they were of no help in alleviating pain during delivery. She discovered that Lamaze is one of many strategies hospitals employ to ensure that laboring women don't do anything that might embarrass the medical staff, such as howl in pain.

Much of the book's information derives from the wisdom of midwives, who Wolf says possess skills that are disappearing and are no longer taught in medical schools—like how to deliver a breech baby without having to do a C-section. But again, this reads like a straight ripoff from Mitford, who made the same point a decade ago. Still, it is a bit shocking that so little has changed.

Wolf takes on the myth of the "nurse-midwife services" that have become all the rage in private hospitals by revealing that an alternative birthing room at her D.C. hospital was set up mostly to lure in customers. Poor design ensured it was almost never used. Wolf spent a few minutes there, only to be whisked away on allegations of fetal distress derived from the heart-rate monitor. She goes on to tell the story of her own labor and delivery in the purple prose of her earlier books. When describing her inability to labor on the schedule dictated by the medical staff (under the threat of a C-section), she writes:

"What was left of me as a physical presence felt like a trapped, cornered animal. I did not know then that mammals' systems shut down in labor when they sense danger: Cats go away to a safe, dark place to give birth; horses and cattle seize up in labor when stress or danger is present; we women, too, are mammals ... I did not feel safe in the hospital. I did not feel safe. In spite of my best intentions, I could not labor ... *Drugged and pinned, that is what I remember of the birth* [italics hers]."

A nurse later confided that the hospital employed midwives to make women feel as though they might have some kind of nice, New-Agey birth experience, but that doctors largely ignored them. That's mostly because the laws in many states, including D.C., where Wolf had her baby, relegate midwives to bystander status without power to override doctors' decisions to, for example, perform an unnecessary episiotomy. Wolf also discovers that the hospitals themselves, under the gun from managed care to cut costs, pressure the medical staff to pare down on the time spent in labor through the use of more aggressive interventions.

But Wolf paints with a broad brush here and never

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acknowledges that many hospitals have, in fact, come a long way since the days when women gave birth flat on their backs in stirrups while husbands were relegated to smoking cigars in the lounge. Many hospitals have even adopted some of the midwives' techniques.

Misconceptions also suffers from another bit of intellectual dishonesty: The book documents Wolf's experience having her first child, but it's not until a brief epilogue that the reader learns there was a second. While Wolf claims it was almost as bad—another C-section, this time recommended by a midwife—she admits that her second birth wasn't quite so traumatic. That experience may have conflicted with the grim story she paints of the whole childbirth experience, but Wolf doesn't moderate her story. Instead, she chooses to suffuse her portrait of motherhood with the angst and furor she worked up five years ago and has managed to sustain all this time.

Along with deconstructing pregnancy and obstetrics, Wolf ruminates over her conflicted transition from working woman to incapacitated, dependent mother, as well as the tumultuous change in gender relations that inevitably comes after the birth of a child. Parents' quick relapse into traditional gender roles after the birth of a child is a subject worthy of further elucidation. Yet Wolf sticks to anecdotes about a few couples she knows without fully exploring just how widespread—or persistent—the problem is, and it's deeply unsatisfying.

After she's teased out all the intimate details of her pregnancy, labor, and delivery, you're left dying to know how the baby affects her own marriage—which presumably is the model of equity every feminist strives for. But Wolf never lets on. While she never seems to have shied away from revealing every detail about her sex life, on this subject she remains studiously tight-lipped, only hinting about her own uxorial conflicts.

One suspects that while the transition may have been a little bumpy, Wolf's equitable power marriage has survived just fine. After all, in the five or so years since the birth of her first child, she has counseled Al Gore, written two books, founded a women's leadership institute, penned scores of op-eds and magazine articles, had a second child, and kept up appearances on the national lecture circuit. It's unlikely she could manage all this if her husband weren't pitching in a little bit at home with the kids—or at least happily footing the bill for lots of household help. And that, in the end, is what's so infuriating about Naomi Wolf. She can identify sexist injustices with a poet's flair, but despite her insistence to the contrary, she will never, ever really suffer from them.

The Washington Monthly Journalism Award

SEPTEMBER 2001

THE STAFF OF THE ONION

"Holy F***ing Shit: Attack on America"

The Onion

Since September 11, the media have risen to the occasion by producing so much top-notch journalism that choosing the finalists for our Monthly Journalism Award has been nearly impossible. But we finally settled on The Onion, *a satirical newsweekly and website (www.theonion.com), which on the week of September 24, released a special issue devoted to the terrorist attack. To a country still shell-shocked and grieving, it provided sorely needed relief from the endless stream of bad news. While others were declaring comedic irony dead,* The Onion's *"Attack on America" series managed—respectfully—to prove otherwise. Stories included: "A Shattered Nation Longs To Care About Stupid Bullshit Again," "U.S. Urges Bin Laden To Form Nation It Can Attack," "Rest of Country Temporarily Feels Deep Affection for New York," and "Hijackers Surprised To Find Selves In Hell: 'We Expected Eternal Paradise For This,' Say Suicide Bombers." Readers' appreciation was evidenced by the fact that* The Onion's *website received the most hits in its history. The special issue is archived at: www.theonion.com/onion3734/index.html.*

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Or e-mail us at **editors@washingtonmonthly.com**. Nominations for stories run in October are due November 1, 2001.

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Political Booknotes

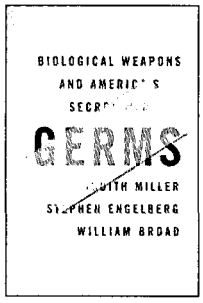
Plague Upon Us

By Michael Crowley

YEARS BEFORE ANTHRAX-BY-mail terrorism horrified America, Bill Clinton had a harrowing germ-war scare of his own. At the elite Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head in 1997, a molecular biologist urged Clinton to read *The Cobra Event*, a thriller involving a mad scientist who unleashes a specially engineered virus in New York, causing victims to claw out their eyes and gobble their tongues. The plot may sound like the product of a high-school creative-writing class, but it badly spooked the president. Clinton began pushing the book on friends and fellow government officials, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and had Pentagon officials brief him on its plausibility. The response he got was not reassuring. From then on, in the words of one national security official, Clinton became "obsessed" with the threat of biological weapons. He grew haunted by the thought of a crop duster spraying disease over the Mall in Washington, and, in the last years of his presidency, he demanded a strong new government emphasis on preparing for such an attack.

In the wake of September 11 and the anthrax letters of the following weeks, Clinton's phobia, once snickered at by some, has gained a much wider resonance. The news that presumed associates of Osama bin Laden had an interest in crop dusters has spurred some Americans to stock up on pills and gas masks. But there remains a dispute about just how easy it would be to infect thousands, or even millions, of Americans with a single strike; plenty of credentialed scientists have dismissed biological weapons as too difficult for terrorists to acquire and use effectively.

The authors of *Germs*—three *New York Times* reporters who have long covered the subject: Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad—are not so reassuring. After years of studying bioweapons, they conclude that, while the danger is sometimes needlessly exaggerated by policymakers trying to alert the public (or swell their budgets), it is "real and rising." Although this has been a clear threat to American policymakers for several years now, the other key conclusion of *Germs* is that a maddening combination of bureaucratic inertia, political infighting, intelligence failures, and sheer denial has left us vulnerable to both the death and public mayhem that would accompany a successful large-scale attack. America remains "woefully unprepared" for a major act of bioterrorism, the authors conclude, "a calamity that would be unlike any this country has experienced."



GERMS:
Biological Weapons and America's Secret War
by Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad
Simon & Schuster, $27.00

By way of explaining how we reached this state of vulnerability, *Germs* treats us to a gripping history of bioweapons in the former Soviet Union, Iraq, and the United States. In many ways, it is the American program—the least sinister and threatening—that is most fascinating and most disturbing. For instance, during the Korean War, the federal government persuaded Seventh-Day Adventists, pacifists who refused to bear arms, to submit to secret tests of germ weapons like Q fever in the Utah desert (the participants were given antibiotics shortly after exposure; none are reported to have died). Larger tests, with more benign germs, were even conducted on American cities. In 1965, mock smallpox germs were sprayed from men's briefcases in Washington, D.C. Years earlier, "mild germs" were released in San Francisco and New York so scientists could study their dispersal and effects on the population.

America renounced its offensive germ weapons program in 1969. But by the 1990s, the Soviet and Iraqi programs had achieved a scope and sophistication that astonished Westerners later granted access to them. Before the Gulf War, for instance, Iraq had stockpiled enough germs to wipe out, in theory, the earth's entire population. The Soviet germ-weapons program, meanwhile, was mind-bogglingly apocalyptic, employing tens of thousands of workers and producing strange and exotic weapons out of substances like cobra venom. In their awful zeal, the Soviets even weaponized "Variant U," a virus cultivated from the blood of a germ-warfare scientist named Ustinov who died horribly after an accidental laboratory infection. It's true that Russia is no longer an enemy, and that Iraq's stockpile was destroyed by arms inspectors after the Gulf War. But that's hardly a reason to relax. Many Russian scientists are either desperately poor, and thus potentially susceptible to offers by well-funded terrorists, or are unaccounted for altogether. This is particularly disturbing when you consider that germ-warfare scientists tell Miller, Engelberg, and Broad that "they could teach a terrorist group how to make devastating germ weapons from a few handfuls of backyard dirt and some easily available lab equipment." In part to publicly underscore this point, the U.S. government recently set out to build a germ-weapons plant entirely out of legal commercial materials; it was easily done. As for Iraq, United Nations weapons inspectors left the country nearly three years ago; no one is sure what Saddam Hussein or his scientists have been up to since.

As Bill Clinton and others grasped these troubling facts, America finally began to take preparedness

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seriously. But the results so far, according to *Germs*, have been a familiar story of government folly, turf wars, and disorganization. Despite concerns about impoverished Russian germ scientists, programs to keep them employed have been stingily funded. The nation's public health system remains "a disaster," with few doctors trained to spot a germ attack and most hospitals ill-equipped to respond to a surge of patients. Stockpiles of vaccines, meanwhile, are pathetically sparse, thanks in part to years of incompetence at the nation's only anthrax vaccine lab. An Army request for new teams to "sniff" the air around battlefields for germs was sneered at by other branches, who saw it as an excuse to buy more helicopters.

And once money did begin to flow under Clinton, it often appears to have been wasted. (See "Weapons of Mass Confusion," May 2001.) Over three years, $143 million was funneled into a program to create crack National Guard response teams, for example, but nine of the 10 units had no communications link to their headquarters, and only half had even been trained. "Biological defense turned into an entitlement program for federal agencies, private contractors, and government consultants," the authors write.

Exasperating words, given that anthrax has now knocked at America's door. But there's some reassuring news here, too—although the authors give it less emphasis. The Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, which gassed the Tokyo subway in 1995, failed a dozen times to spray germs in populated areas. And the greatest fear of U.S. scientists—the production of ruthlessly efficient "superviruses" for which there are no vaccines or cures—appears to be years away and well out of terrorists' reach. What's more, the recent terrorist attacks attacks have already accelerated crucial bio war-response efforts, from public education to the faster stockpiling of vaccines. Still, should terrorists acquire germ weapons, there will never be a perfect defense against suicidal individuals happy to act as "smallpox carriers or Marburg martyrs," who wander through airports or downtown areas. We can only hope for the best and prepare, as quickly as we can, for the worst. It may be nearer than we ever imagined.

MICHAEL CROWLEY *is an associate editor of* The New Republic.

Jurist's Prudence

By Tony Mauro

AS HARD AS IT IS TO BELIEVE, it has been 10 years since Clarence Thomas joined the Supreme Court. Ten years since the Columbus Day weekend when the nation was transfixed by the lurid, bizarre Senate Judiciary Committee hearings into allegations that he sexually harassed Anita Hill. Ten years since the first President Bush declared Thomas to be the "most qualified person" to take the seat occupied until then by Thurgood Marshall.

SILENT JUSTICE:
The Clarence Thomas Story
by John Greenya
Barricade Books, $24.95

It has been a remarkable decade for Thomas, who, in the darkest days of the Anita Hill mess, said he would never be able to reclaim his good name. He seems to have recovered at least some of it, emerging as an increasingly influential, if still controversial, justice. In the spring of 2001, Thomas administered the oath of office to three of his oldest friends, who now occupy the top three positions in the Justice Department: Attorney General John Ashcroft, Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, and Solicitor General Ted Olson.

Through hard work and a deepening—though disputed—jurisprudence, he has even begun to erase the near-racist caricature painted early on by his critics: that he was an unqualified, unthinking "yes" man for Antonin Scalia, manipulated by his white law clerks. In his personal life, Thomas has been transformed by a new addition to his family: grandnephew Mark, adopted by Thomas and his wife out of a risky home situation in 1997.

Exploring how Thomas got here from there could be a splendid basis for a book, but John Greenya's work does almost nothing to advance that goal. In fact, most of it could have been written a decade ago, or a little later, after the post-confirmation books on Thomas came out. Greenya cites those extensively, as well as long excerpts from Thomas's speeches and writings that pad out the book but add little new insight into how Thomas operates as a powerful justice today.

Even the interview that has been billed as a major new addition to the Thomas story is something of a retread. Greenya spoke with Barry Maddox, owner of a Washington D.C. chain of electronics stores, who convincingly describes Thomas as a regular consumer of rented adult videos in the mid-1980s. But Maddox has surfaced before, notably in *Strange Justice*, Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson's 1994 work on the Thomas confirmation.

Perhaps to buttress the book's title, Greenya dwells on Thomas's notorious silence on the bench, which Greenya describes as "the most conspicuous, most confusing" aspect of his overall silence as a human being (even though Thomas makes more televised speeches than any other justice). Greenya could have substantially dispelled that confusion by citing Thomas's own primary explanation: that he comes to the bench with a few questions in mind, but if the lawyers arguing the case answer them first, he sees no need to chime in just to hear his own voice. Greenya could have also noted that recent justices, including William Brennan, Jr. and Harry Blackmun, were almost as quiet as Thomas, and that no one ever made an issue of their silence.

Greenya is an able writer who has written several biographies of people who assisted him in the work. Thomas offered no help at all, as is his practice. He put the word out to friends that he wanted no part of the

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10th-anniversary pieces that were being written this year. So Greenya was laboring under a disadvantage that most biographers don't suffer. But there is much on the record that Greenya could have analyzed, namely the dozens of opinions Thomas has written over the decade. The brand of originalism Thomas displays in his opinions is unique, betraying a degree of nostalgia for the times and principles of the Founding Fathers that even Scalia does not always share. But Greenya discusses only two of Thomas's decisions, and those only briefly.

Thomas is, as Greenya says more than once, an enigma, a mysterious figure on the national scene who warrants all the scrutiny he is getting in this tenth anniversary year. But the definitive work that solves the mystery of how Thomas survived his bizarre debut to become a conservative icon has yet to be written.

TONY MAURO *is Supreme Court correspondent for* LEGAL TIMES *and* AMERICAN LAWYER MEDIA.

Naked Ambition

By Jamie Malanowski

FOR THOSE TOO YOUNG TO remember, the prime of Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the tiny, genial Germanic psychosexual therapist occurred in the 1980s, when she rose to celebrity advocating the position that sex is good. How and why, after several millennia of nearly universal human copulation, this position came to be regarded as noteworthy would itself seem to be an appropriate subject for a book. Suffice it to say that with her pixieish charm and her seemingly unique ability to speak plainly about commonplace, everyday mammalian functions (a talent rendered apparently even more exotic by her grandmotherly age), she presented sex as something sweet and fun. This was a winning approach during a decade when, between cocaine, AIDS, movies like *Fatal Attraction*, and the grunt-filled grindings available on the newly opened home-video porn market, sex was generally seen as something dark and dangerous. Dr. Ruth was able to position herself as a name brand.

POWER:
The Ultimate Aphrodisiac
by Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Dr. Steven Kaplan
Madison Books, $22.05

For name brands to exist, of course, they need to be affixed to products; otherwise, they go a-glimmering. Dr. Ruth's latest product is a book called *Power: The Ultimate Aphrodisiac*, written with Dr. Steven Kaplan, who teaches at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They have collaborated before, though one can only speculate about

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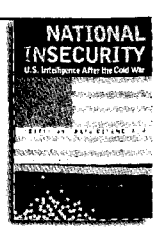

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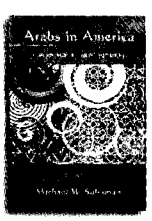

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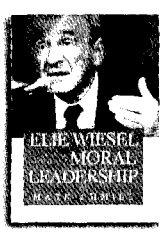

ELIE WIESEL AND THE POLITICS OF MORAL LEADERSHIP
Mark Chmiel
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—Howard Zinn
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their relative contributions; if it's any indication, Dr. Steve's name appears on the cover in a rather smaller typeface. The book is an eclectic survey of the stories of prominent political figures throughout human history, knit together with observations on the role that different mating habits had on the acquisition and exercise of power. Dr. Ruth meanders painlessly, but not captivatingly, through rulers, such as Jefferson, FDR, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth, and Catherine the Great, and extra-political elites, like Madame de Pompadour, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, and Yang Guifei, a concubine to an eighth-century Chinese emperor.

All this range is not the same thing as breadth, however; the studies seem like solitary billboards along a road in big, flat Kansas. If you don't know much about the people or circumstances she's writing about, this book may be most useful in inspiring you to seek out lengthier treatments. If you do know something about the people she writes about, you realize she has missed many details and subtleties, barely scratching the surface of some of her subjects. It seems to be the kind of book that could be appreciated best by, say, an old ladies' reading group located someplace where they never get *The National Enquirer* or even *Time* magazine, or perhaps by a very bookish 11-year-old whose hormones are beginning to percolate.

For example—to take only the cases where I felt up on the reading—Dr. Ruth looks at the relationship between Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She writes that Franklin not only had live-in girlfriends who worked for him as secretaries. She also notes that Eleanor had not only girlfriends, but a boyfriend of sorts, her bodyguard Earl Miller, with whom she had an intimate, romantic, and perhaps sexual relationship. She ignores the juicy detail that Miller had an affair with one of Franklin's girlfriends, Missy LeHand. This suggests the merry image of the nights when the hallways of the White House were filled with people in their nighties and PJs, scampering (or rolling) from room to room with the doors slamming behind them as though in a French farce. Of course, this omission doesn't detract from her larger point—that many of our proudest moments as a nation were presided over by people who shared unusual domestic arrangements. But this is not exactly breaking news.

In a similar way, Dr. Ruth manages to cover the by-now well-masticated highlights of JFK's sex life. (Let's see: Marilyn, check; Jayne Mansfield, check; Fiddle and Faddle, check...) But she is vague in what she concludes about his behavior. "It should be noted," she writes, "that whatever Kennedy's failings may have been on a personal level, there is little indication that they were reflected in the way he formulated policy or conducted his administration." Then she immediately argues that they *did* have a bearing, correctly pointing out that Kennedy "was unable to replace J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI for fear that Hoover might retaliate by releasing embarrassing information" and that his relationship with Judith Campbell involved him with organized crime. Well, yeah! And what were the implications of that? She does not mention that shortly after Hoover helped put the kibosh on a Senate hearing in which it may have been revealed that Kennedy had slept with a prostitute who had previously worked for the head of East German intelligence—an American Profumo Affair, except bigger—Bobby Kennedy signed off on Hoover's request to bug Martin Luther King, Jr.'s bedroom activities. Dr. Ruth ends up saying revelations about Kennedy's behavior led to "an erosion of trust and the development of a deep cynicism about politics and politicians." She doesn't say it led him to abuse power.

But the real problem with this book is not its superficiality; it's Dr. Ruth's inexplicable decision not to discuss anyone living. "In an era of 'kiss-and-tell memoirs', I thought it was about time for a 'kiss-and-reflect' approach," she writes. Fine. It's not like I'm longing to keep recapping the pathetic and farcical images of the Lewinsky saga. But let's be real. In the last quarter century (by unofficial count), there have been at least 38 Washington sex scandals, ranging from Wilbur Mills and the Argentine Bombshell and Wayne Hays and the doxy on his payroll, to Gary Hart and *Monkey Business*, Barney Frank and his entrepreneurial boyfriend, Chuck Robb and his backrubs, Clarence Thomas and *Long Dong Silver*, to the vaporization of Gary Condit. Clearly, we as a people have an abiding interest in their stories, even though they always play out in the same predictable way: Some guy in Washington gets caught in the act of fulfilling his urges, and the media finds some conveniently larger question—abuse of the government payroll, a threat to national security, sexual harassment, recklessness, fitness to serve—to frame the discussion. At that point, we beat the guy like an old rug.

It would have been more interesting to hear Dr. Ruth, a fairly canny observer of human sexuality and cultural norms, discuss why we are (or act) shocked and surprised and treat sex (or pretend to treat it) as if it's not simply part of the variety of human behavior. Her all-too-brief comments on the theme are provocative. She argues that while we were once content to be led by our superiors, we now expect leaders who are human and approachable. Knowing about their sex lives, she says, renders them about as basically human as you can get. "Sometimes bringing someone down seems to be the only way to bring them closer," she writes, in perhaps her most insightful, least grammatical sentence.

But why do we want to bring these people down? Sometimes, clearly, it's partisanship: The left didn't like Clarence Thomas; the right didn't like Clinton. In other cases, though, it seems like the public and the media comprise a permanently floating lynch mob. There they sit disgusted by the spin and imagery and partisanship and soft money with which modern politicians protect themselves and ready to pounce on any politician who betrays a human weakness or even a human urge. This seems like an ineffective and dysfunctional way to

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monitor our leaders.

The more interesting book Dr. Ruth could write awaits.

JAMIE MALANOWSKI *is a New York writer.*

20/20 Hindsight

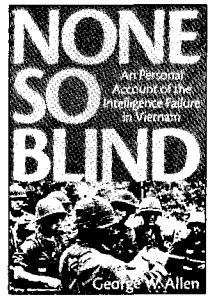
By Carmen Mauriello

MOST OF US HAVE LONG since tired of rehashing the "lessons of Vietnam." But with America now waging war against another little-understood enemy, a refresher course isn't a bad idea. What is striking about this well-timed book by a former intelligence analyst who specialized in Vietnam during the entire course of the war is how intelligence failures lay at the heart of the problem.

A 30-year veteran of the intelligence community, George Allen attacks U.S. policymakers for willfully ignoring the gravity of the Vietnam situation—specifically Allen's own repeated attempts to alert them to the many problems. Although the if-they'd-only-listened-to-me tone of the book grows a bit tiresome, there's little doubt that Allen's main contention is right: Overwhelming hubris and a foolish belief in American invincibility led military leaders to discount these warnings and plunge ahead. And he provides fresh, fascinating insider detail on how the misuse of intelligence contributed mightily to America's greatest military failure.

A patriotic Army brat raised on Coastal Artillery posts, Allen volunteered for the Navy on his 17th birthday at the height of World War II. After three years as a radioman in the Pacific Theater, Allen studied political science, international relations, and history at the University of Utah, before accepting a position on Army intelligence's Far East desk in 1949. By the time Dien Bien Phu fell in 1954, Allen had developed grave concerns about Vietnam, and gotten his first taste of military indifference.

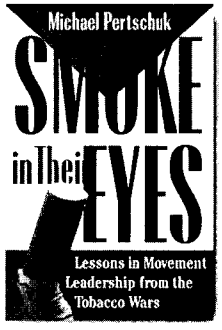
Allen's intelligence bureau had discovered a massive buildup by the Viet Minh (predecessors to the Viet Cong) near the French garrison months before the attack. Allen had briefed his commanding officer, but the general took the mobilization to be the result of a French strategy to trap the enemy's main force. Allen's attempts to convince the general otherwise were brushed aside as "nonsense."



NONE SO BLIND:
A Personal Account of the Intelligence Failure in Vietnam
by George W. Allen
Ivan R. Dee, $22.50

This early episode followed a pattern that would mark Allen's career, in which his warnings were ignored or censored to increasingly dire effect. Early on, Allen shrewdly identified two handicaps he believes sabotaged his career: the U.S. government's insistence on accentuating the positive and his own lack of access to sought-after intelligence. Allen's stubbornly realistic assessments in the wake of the mounting Vietnam nightmare seem only to have built up these roadblocks.

A 1962 episode epitomized Allen's frustration. In preparation for Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's visit to Saigon, Allen's intelligence team prepared a map showing which side controlled which parts of the country. Allen's superiors were concerned that the map displayed "altogether too much red," signifying Viet Cong control, and not enough blue. So Col. James Winterbottom began stripping off areas of red, thereby converting Viet Cong territories to "status unknown" in an effort to portray the situation as less dismal. In spite of this, General Paul Harkins, commander of the American troops in Vietnam, introduced it to McNamara as his "horrors" map, complaining it was too generous to the enemy. "With another day of editing," writes Allen, "Colonel [Winterbottom] might have achieved a victorious end



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of the insurgency throughout the rural areas."

Allen's determination to influence American involvement in Vietnam led him to pinball between Army intelligence, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the CIA throughout the late 1950s and '60s. As supervisors denied him access to sensitive information, Allen was consigned to mid-level positions from which he was unable to sound the alarm. He managed to get closer to the action, transferring from Honolulu to Washington and later to Saigon. But his prescient reports on Viet Cong military buildups, the deficient ideological base of the South Vietnamese government, and the need to combat guerrilla warfare were trivialized by higher-ups as "gloom and doom." By 1970, Allen's will had been broken. Asked what he wanted to be reassigned after a two-year leave in London, Allen replied, "Anywhere but Vietnam."

Allen's bitterness frequently gets the better of him, turning well-supported criticisms into childish finger-pointing. But what's astonishing about *None So Blind* is how often Allen was right. As early as 1966, in a meeting with McNamara, Allen declared that America could not win the war because the Viet Cong had sufficient resources and superior determination. Allen believed an immediate ceasefire that put the problem into a "broader regional and international context" was the only move that would allow the U.S. to save face while still preventing the spread of Communism into Cambodia and Laos. But Allen's analysis didn't persuade McNamara to change.

Allen is also adept at exposing the government's cynical propaganda campaign to reinforce Americans' support for the war. He reported at the time what has since become received wisdom: Virtually everyone was misled. Policymakers were denied hard-to-swallow intelligence estimates, the press was fed overly sunny information, and the American people were the target of a White House campaign to manipulate public opinion.

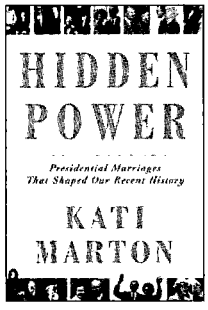
But the bold predictions he made to McNamara and others expose the flaw in Allen's accusations, then and now. Rather than press harder for his beliefs, alert the media, or resign in protest, Allen chose to remain (seething) in intelligence until his retirement in 1979. He tacitly acknowledges his own complicity while reflecting on his discussion with McNamara. Allen writes, "If I had known how much longer (seven years) it would be before we negotiated a final settlement with Hanoi, I certainly would have pursued the matter further at the time." As it was, Allen merely collected a volume of "I told you so's."

CARMEN MAURIELLO *is a* WASHINGTON MONTHLY *intern.*

Old Wives' Tales

By Sandra McElwaine

IN *Hidden Power: Presidential Marriages That Shaped Our Recent History*, Kati Marton provides a rehash of the intimate lives of a dozen occupants of the White House, from Edith and Woodrow Wilson to George and Laura Bush. In a series of gossipy vignettes, Marton explores these high-profile alliances, emphasizing the priapic instincts of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton; the amorous nature of Woodrow Wilson; Franklin D. Roosevelt's romance with Lucy Mercer Rutherfurd; and George H. W. Bush's alleged affair with his longtime secretary, Jennifer Fitzgerald. She recounts the egoism and narcissism of the men involved and the humiliation some of their wives stoically endured.



HIDDEN POWER:
Presidential Marriages That Shaped Our Recent History
by Kati Marton
Pantheon Books, $25.00

With special access to the White House through her husband, Richard Holbrooke, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, her depiction of the tortured Clinton marriage seems especially astute. She also manages to capture the bitterness and tartness of Barbara Bush and the freewheeling, fun-loving spirit of Betty Ford. By scrutinizing these well-publicized partnerships, Marton aims to assess the impact of presidential spouses and the behind-the scenes authority they wielded through pillow talk and subterfuge.

"Whether as soulmates, helpmates or those who are essential to their husbands' political survival, all first ladies have played a part in history," writes Marton. "The quality of her relationship with her husband has been the key factor in determining the extent of her influence." Unfortunately, despite a long list of celebrity acknowledgments and interviews, copious footnotes, and a fair amount of original reporting, there is little new in this ambitious interpretation. Marton arbitrarily omits the Hardings, Coolidges, and Hoovers because "their stories simply do not resonate today." And the Eisenhowers are summarily dismissed because the author finds them wanting. She maintains they left no historic imprint as a couple and calls them anachronistic—"a nostalgic throwback to America's age of conformity."

"Insignificant" is how she describes the colorful Mamie Eisenhower, writing that she played no part in Ike's administration. "Her role was a simple extension of her many years as a dutiful Army wife."

If Marton asserts full-fledged collaboration like the Roosevelts, Johnsons, and Carters as basic criterion for hidden power, though, it is hard to comprehend why she chose to devote a chapter to Pat Nixon, probably the nation's most rejected and long-suffering spouse. From the moment they moved into the White House, the Nixons lived almost totally separate lives, communicating largely through members of their staffs and studiously avoiding each other's company. Henry Kissinger said he never heard Nixon directly address his wife.

During campaigns, "Plastic Pat,"

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as she was called, stood next to her husband silent and perfect. She rarely expressed an opinion, her standard line being, "I don't give my husband advice because he doesn't need it." During Watergate, when Pat learned that her husband had been taping conversations, her immediate reaction was, "Destroy those tapes." It was advice that might have saved his presidency, but Nixon never consulted or reached out to her. It was his close friend Bebe Rebozo who broke the news about the impending resignation. Marton even points out that Nixon deliberately turned his back on his wife. So why was she included in this book?

In contrast, the irascible Bess Wallace Truman, who loathed both public life and living in the White House, wielded inestimable clout. Harry Truman adored her, pined for her during her long absences from the executive mansion, haunted the mail room for her letters, and always referred to her as "the Boss." Bess viewed her husband as a man, not a position, keeping him grounded and completely in touch with reality. When he was delayed by a snowstorm and arrived late for Christmas at home in Independence, Missouri, an angry Bess greeted him, "I guess you couldn't think of any more reasons to stay away. As far as I'm concerned you might as well have stayed in Washington."

Harry was so devoted that he spent his entire life trying to impress and please his wife. From the Potsdam Conference with Stalin and Churchill, he wrote, "Your letter came last night while I was at Joe's dinner. Was I glad it to get it! I can't get Chanel No. 5 ... Not even on the black market. But I managed to get some other kind for six dollars an ounce at an American PX. They said it was equal to no 5." He consulted Bess about his most difficult decisions, convinced she was a far better judge of people and character than he was. "Bess," he said, "was a full partner in all my transactions—politically and otherwise."

Marton shows at length the many ways in which other first ladies have exercised their own unique forms of persuasion. But by far the most compelling chapter of Marton's book is the first one. It deals with Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, the second wife of Woodrow Wilson, and the only woman who truly affected the life of the nation, wielding unbridled power while masterminding a cover-up. Even before their marriage, the seemingly stern, moralistic Woodrow Wilson was so passionate about his ladylove that he installed a direct line between her home and the White House in order to circumvent the switchboard. He instructed her in the use of top-secret national and international codes, and together they would send and decipher incoming and outgoing messages.

Edith sat in on many political meetings. State papers, with notes in the margin on which ones he expected her to read and comment on, usually accompanied Wilson's daily love letters. "Much as I enjoy your delicious love letters," she told him, "I enjoy even more the ones in which you tell me ... of what you are working on ... then I feel I am sharing your work and being taken into partnership as it were."

After their marriage and throughout World War I, Edith was in all respects his "little partner." When Wilson suffered a paralyzing stroke, she literally shut down the White House, turned it into an infirmary, controlled all access to her husband, and acted as *de facto* president, reading cables and secret messages and putting off things she considered unimportant. As rumors grew about the president, she refused to publicize his condition or allow him to resign. She hid his condition from a suspicious congressional delegation by propping her husband up on pillows, his limp side well covered, his good right arm exposed. The ruse was so effective that the delegation was reassured, and Wilson dropped any thought of a successor.

For the last 18 months of his presidency, a woman with two years of formal education and who opposed female suffrage, assumed the powerful role of commander-in-chief and controlled the flow of information to the entire country.

As for the rest of the first ladies, one wonders whether proximity to power denotes true power at all: Are the stories and rumors merely smoke and mirrors or evidence of actual influence and authority? Marton's book brings us no closer to an answer.

SANDRA MCELWAINE *is a Washington-based writer.*

Motherboard Jungle

By Alexander Wohl

I WAS FIRST EXPOSED TO THE new "science" of computers in high school in the '70s. As I recall, it involved feeding a series of punch cards placed in a special order into a large box that sat on an old-fashioned school desk. After some impressive machine-like noises, the computer would produce a long tape with holes punched in it that I was told was my "program." I

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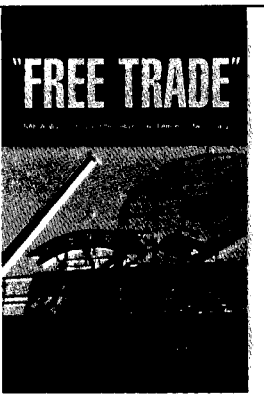

The Selling of "Free Trade"
NAFTA, Washington, and the Subversion of American Democracy
BY JOHN R. MACARTHUR
"MacArthur's faultless ear and muted irony make *The Selling of 'Free Trade'* an immensely pleasurable read."—*Chicago Tribune*

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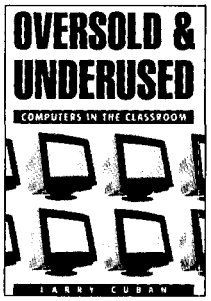
don't recall ever understanding the benefits of this exciting new technology, except for those really clever folks who figured out how to print messages like "Happy Birthday" on their tapes. A few years later, in college, during what could be considered the dawn of computer learning, I sat alongside hundreds of students as we were taught to write programs in computer languages like BASIC and FORTRAN. To this day, I have no idea what value they held for me.

Today, computer punch cards and BASIC are scientific antiquities, outdated products in a long line of increasingly sophisticated technological learning tools that have been relegated to the techno trash heap. But even as computers have grown more powerful and prevalent in the world of education, the underlying question that confronted my classmates and teachers remains: How will we ever be able to use computers for teaching and learning in an efficient, productive, and ultimately enlightening way?



OVERSOLD AND UNDERUSED:
Computers in the Classroom
by Larry Cuban
Harvard University Press, $27.05

Over the last decade, the idea that computers will revolutionize the classroom has been obsessively hyped by the business and tech communities, politicians, academics, and even some teachers. Larry Cuban, a professor of education at Stanford University, confronts this challenge in his insightful new book, *Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom*. Cuban has written frequently and skeptically about the value and proclivity of computers in education. He elaborates on those themes here. This slim volume raises weighty questions: What have we been led to expect from educational technology? Are those expectations realistic? Are we trying to achieve them in the right way? Cuban doesn't provide simple answers. But in explaining the history of computer technology in education, and by suggesting why desired outcomes have or haven't come about, he provides clear-minded insights into how ed-ucators can develop what remains a largely untapped resource.

To find an answer, Cuban examines case studies in kindergartens, high schools, and his own academic turf, Stanford University, all of which are located in Silicon Valley, perhaps the most technologically advanced spot on earth. Some of what he discovers is encouraging: ethnically diverse preschoolers using interactive software to build vocabulary; teenagers using the Internet to research projects and produce professional presentations; college students in a creative writing course developing their literary skills through Web pages to critique and collaborate with their classmates. But much of it is also disheartening. These programs may be models of technological sophistication, but Cuban wonders why, "in this heartland of high-tech innovation, where beliefs in technological progress run strong and equipment is abundant, has there been so little use of the new machines and software inside classrooms and so little change in existing teaching practices?"

Two theories—one practical, the other more philosophical—form the crux of Cuban's analysis. The first says that teachers don't really factor into the technology equation. Computers can be a wonderful resource, even for teachers who were great before they came along. But simply dumping computers in a classroom doesn't make them useful. Many of the teachers Cuban observes have concerns about the reliability, accessibility, and complexity of the machines and the ease with which they can be incorporated into a lesson plan. What's more, many teachers lack technical support—unlike businesses, most schools don't have an IT guy down the hall to save the day when computers go haywire.

The other reason that computers haven't brought about widespread classroom change is because they literally were not designed to do so. Educational software developers failed to give serious consideration to teachers' needs or even to consult them when designing learning programs. It's an embarrassing revelation. After all, you wouldn't design a new golf club without talking to a few golf pros, would you? But that's essentially what's happened. Many of the applications used to teach kids were modeled on programs used in the business world, simply because that's all that developers had to work with. As a result, students and teachers are expected to learn with spreadsheets and databases created for business professionals, software with "rampant featurism" too complex for most kids to grasp. If successful products are to be developed, Cuban says, they'll have to put the teacher-student dynamic front and center.

Software designed for business naturally leads to curricula which overemphasize such things as job training and increasing productivity at the cost of lessons young students need to learn (and teachers wish to teach). Many educators, Cuban included, believe today's learning technology has caused schools to rely too heavily on a corporate model. But lazy software developers aren't the only ones that prevent computers from being useful teaching aids. Elected leaders share the blame, too. No one would deny that education has been a way out of poverty for millions of Americans—it's why President Clinton chose the catchy phrase "the more you learn, the more you earn" to help sell his education programs.

But the emphasis on a direct link between education and future earnings rankles many educators who believe, correctly, that it shortchanges not only learning but also the democratic mission at the heart of our public school system. Given their disappointing performance to date, the question of whether computers will ever live up to their hype is a dicey one. The results "tempt" Cuban to call for a moratorium on

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new computers. But he stops short of doing so. As anyone who's fiddled with the latest educational software or explored the vast learning resources on the Web can attest, there is good reason to continue trying. But it's important to recognize that those who tout computers as miracle cures for ailing schools are no different from proponents of vouchers and privatization, who promise the same thing.

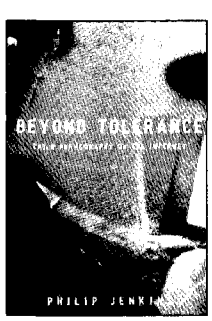
Technology alone is no panacea for problems like inequitable funding, overcrowded classrooms, and crumbling, antiquated schools. Only through a commitment to working with teachers and developing programs aimed at kids will computers fulfill their potential as a teaching aid. Any approach that limits teacher involvement to flipping classroom computers on in the morning and off in the evening is guaranteed to leave a valuable resource untapped. To pretend otherwise would be as silly as teaching today's students FORTRAN.

ALEXANDER WOHL, *an adjunct professor at American University, is the director of public affairs at the American Federation of Teachers.*

Pedophiles.com

By John Schwartz

LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT FROM the outset, in case anybody might possibly be wondering: Child pornography is evil. Because it involves child abuse and molestation, the laws of every country prohibit it. The ACLU, which defends the right of adults to view X-rated fare, abhors it. The fact that such stuff can be found online is one of the facts most often trumpeted by those who warn that the virtual world is a wicked place, whether they be ministers preaching to the flock, law enforcement officials looking for bigger budgets, or politicians drumming up votes (George W. Bush himself has used the overdrawn phrase: "the dark dungeons of the Internet").



BEYOND TOLERANCE:
Child Pornography on the Internet
by Philip Jenkins
New York University Press, $24.95

So anyone who picks up *Beyond Tolerance: Child Pornography on the Internet*, might well ask what Philip Jenkins, a professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, can bring to the topic.

What he brings to it is a sense of scale. Like so many aspects of the Internet, child pornography has become the center of a debate packed with hidden agendas. Jenkins, in the context of describing the fight over the 1996 Communications Decency Act, describes the problem with real elegance: "The debate over the CDA tended to become polarized between two extreme stances: Conservatives held that a vast amount of Internet business involved the most horrifying pornography, while liberals all but denied that such material existed."

The key, Jenkins suggests, lies in finding a middle argument that neither exaggerates nor downplays the problem. He writes, "A third and less publicized position was possible, namely, that although pedophile interests and images account for only a small proportion of life on the Web, this was still a substantial volume, maintained by a small but very active underworld."

Jenkins hates hype. His previous works have been earnest attempts to deflate what he sees as statistically warped hysterias about the prevalence of serial murder, of pedophilia by priests, and of designer drugs. He calls this "deconstructing public perception of social problems." And, in fact, Jenkins admits toward the beginning of this slim volume that he had gone into the project intending to debunk certain myths again. He defines himself as "a libertarian" who believes "criminal law should be kept as far removed as possible from issues of personal morality. I am in no sense an anti-smut activist, and I reject efforts to restrict sexually explicit adult material, whether these attempts derive from religious or moralistic believers on the right or from feminists on the left. I know of no convincing evidence that pornography causes harm or incites illegal behavior where both subjects and consumers are consenting adults and I believe there are convincing arguments that adult porn can be actively beneficial and liberating for both sexes."

As he did his research, however, he found that child pornography indeed exists and that the subculture is thriving thanks to the easy, anonymous global distribution made possible via the Internet. All the screaming of the anti-porn activists has made this sound like a multibillion-dollar annual industry. But Jenkins presents evidence that belies the myth of a kiddie-porn financial empire. What he found: obsessive collectors passing around the same pictures, thousands of them, again and again.

Jenkins's exploration led him into a world of here-today, gone-tomorrow sites that help tens of thousands of collectors amass collections of thousands of images of children and adolescents in every conceivable sexual permutation. Although he continues to believe that it is wrong for anti-pornography activists to use the specter of kiddie porn to try to ban constitutionally protected adult materials, "I now found myself in the disconcerting position of seeking to raise public concern about a quite authentic problem that has been neglected."

Don't you just love it when those libertarians get whupped upside the head with something that they believe government actually ought to do?

Beyond Tolerance is a useful introduction to the methods that the kiddie-porn community uses to hide its activities. It provides a smart history of the child-porn industry, which flourished in the loose and floppy '70s and was almost wiped out by tough government intervention, only to resurface and flourish with the advent of PCs and modems. Jenkins is also careful to make a distinction

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between the penumbral world of teenagers, who may be older than the age of consent in many jurisdictions but who are still considered children by the legal standards of pornography, and true children.

Jenkins encountered a problem that anyone who hopes to research this shadowy world must deal with: Since the laws against possessing child pornography can be interpreted even to mean viewing it on a computer screen, how does a researcher explore the subject without making a reservation at Sing Sing? His answer is ingenious, though a bit unsatisfying: He simply set his browser software to download Web pages without loading any photographs on the pages. This feature, a holdover from the times when slow modem speeds meant that image-rich pages would take forever to load, kept Jenkins on the right side of the law. But any reporter who has spent time looking into online forums where pornography is traded knows that descriptions of images alone can't always be trusted: That file offered up as "young pussy" could well turn out to be a picture of a kitten posted by some joker.

If this world were just images and their brief descriptions swapped at 3 a.m., Jenkins's methods wouldn't reap much. But in fact, it's a chatty little community of "Loli-Lovers" who seek out each others' virtual company in the message boards and chat rooms that many of the Internet portals offer as a free service, comparing notes on their compulsively built collections, filling in the gaps of the series of better-known photographs and videos of certain children, and tipping each other off to online addresses where more can be found.

Law enforcement has a tough time in this pseudonymous environment; the researchers' needs are somewhat easier, since the "pedos," people passing under such online handles as "Godfather Corleone" and "Love2See," are likelier to share their stories and methods than their identities. Some of them argue that the images they see keep them from actually touching children; some of them argue that the best pictures show that the children are enjoying the acts depicted; all of them say that only the stupid get caught.

Jenkins's proposed solution, which includes a call for a truly international effort to crack down on the trade in these heartbreaking images, is ambitious and, he admits, daunting. Comparing child pornographers to fish in the sea, he concludes, "There is no easy way to catch the fish without draining or poisoning the entire sea. We have to find means of killing or crippling the subculture without destroying the Internet, with which so much can be accomplished." Trying to set the terms of the discussion realistically, as Jenkins has done, is a start.

JOHN SCHWARTZ *covers technology for* The New York Times *and is co-author, with Michael Osterholm, of* Living Terrors, *a book about bioterrorism.*

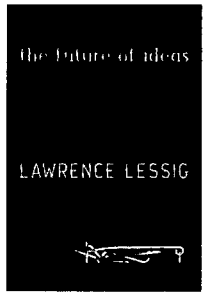
Gofer Broke

By Nicholas Thompson

SPEAKERS' CORNER, A GATHERING for crazed and inspired orators every Sunday in London's Hyde Park, represents true freedom for Lawrence Lessig.

Everyone meets in a public park. They give speeches in English, a language free for anyone to use. They say whatever they want and don't copyright their rants.

Cable television, on the other hand, represents complete control. One company owns the wires that run into your home, other companies decide what to send through those wires, and still other companies copyright that content. Lessig, now a law professor at Stanford, uses this example in *The Future of Ideas* to describe the three layers that make up the Internet: physical, code, and content. The fiber-optic lines running across the country and the broadcast spectrum used for wireless Internet represent the physical layer. The programs and languages that run the network—HTML, Microsoft Windows—represent code. The documents we create and the Web pages we use represent content.



THE FUTURE OF IDEAS:
The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World
by Lawrence Lessig
Random House, $30.00

Lessig's thesis in this manifesto is that each of these three layers has become less and less free as the Internet has matured, stifling innovation and giving power to big, bad corporations. He writes: "The forces that the original Internet threatened to transform are well on their way to transforming the Internet ... the future that promised great freedom and innovation will not be ours. The future that threatened the reemergence of almost perfect control, will."

Lessig is surely right about the Internet's early days. Tim Berners-Lee, for example, spawned the World Wide Web by writing HTML and HTTP, the protocols we all now use to access the Web, in a way that would allow anyone to transfer any file or program across any computer attached to the government-created Internet. The University of Minnesota's text-only Gopher system was the biggest competitor back in 1993. But the university wanted to restrict use. Berners-Lee didn't, and he put all of his licenses into the public domain.

Soon, everyone started to use HTML, and a young graduate student named Marc Andreesen created a program that would work with HTML, called Netscape Navigator, which allowed us to view the Web in a user-friendly windowed environment. Andreesen and his peers didn't work with Gopher because they feared that the University of Minnesota could gobble up their work. Suddenly, we had what we now call the Web, and soon we had online booksellers, search engines, and auctions. The online innovators used HTML in ways that Anderson hadn't conceived of, but they all benefited from the free and open base that

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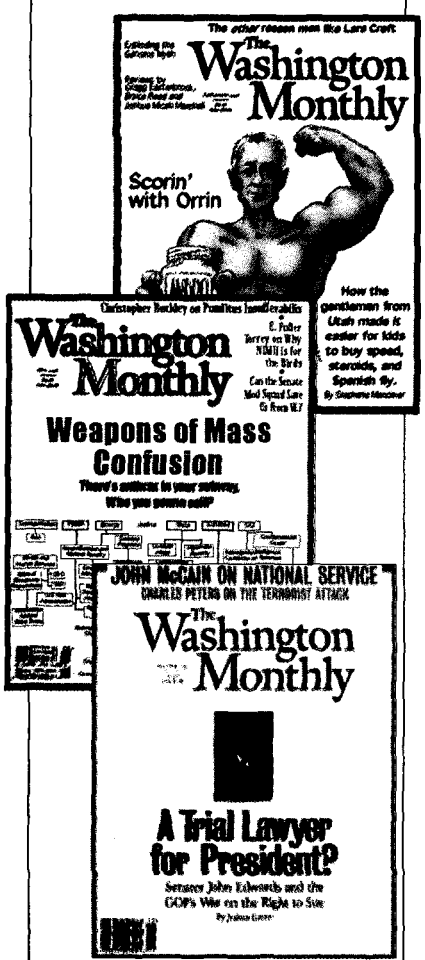

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Berners-Lee created. No one heard from Gopher again.

But now control has started spreading on the Net, and the companies interested in limiting use have significantly more power than the University of Minnesota ever did. AOL Time Warner and AT&T have a stranglehold on the broadband cable lines people use to get high-speed Internet access. Microsoft seems poised to continue strangling opposition. Congress keeps extending copyright law and patent protections, both in duration and in scope, even though the foundations of the Net were built when essentially noone patented software.

To Lessig, this is deeply ominous. Microsoft can virtually control what software we run. Anyone who writes an innovative program has to worry that some giant company already owns a patent relating to a tiny part of that code. AOL Time Warner may soon be able to control even the kinds of programs that can run over their wires. What s the incentive now, for example, for a young and ambitious cybergeek to write a good program for streaming video online, a potential competitor to cable? As AT&T executive Daniel Somers said in 1999 when asked about streaming video, We didn t spend $56 billion on a cable network to have the blood sucked out of our veins.

Lessig ends his book with a series of sweeping proposals for freeing the Internet. A small sample: The government should model fiber-optic lines after the highway system, laying free federal lines unconnected to any service. All government agencies should open up non-classified programming work. If a state creates a program for processing welfare checks, it should let everyone whos interested see the code that created it. Patent and copyright terms should be dramatically reduced.

Although Lessig often uses lawyerly prose and incessantly restates his argument, hes written an extremely important book that should be widely read in Washington, particularly given the importance of the government s role in regulating telecom industries and how little most politicians understand technology.

Still, as with most manifestos, particularly those with overwrought titles, *The Future of Ideas* gives short shrift to solid counterarguments. The Internet economy s transformation over the past five years has probably changed the way that programmers work as much as any regulatory change, something Lessig doesn t mention. Surely an overheated economy offering millions to nearly anyone with computer skills generated much of the wild exchange of ideas in the Internet s early days. Teenagers with computer skills wanted to write code four years ago, and many, such as Shawn Fanning, who created Napster, succeeded tremendously. Today 19-year-olds with computer skills probably spend their days playing video games.

Second, theres a benefit to all of the corporate regimentation of the Internet: People can actually use the damn thing now! Microsoft may kill off innovators, but at least having one option is less confusing than choosing from 20. The best of all worlds would allow Shawn Fanning to write all the code he wants, unrestricted by oppressive copyrights and fiber-optic lines rigged to kill his work, but it would also allow Fannings grandmother to order her groceries online without having to plug an extra USB port into her motherboard. Large corporations can at least streamline our time online, and they do know how to serve customers what they want. That s at least one reason why more people, even in London, watch cable TV than go to Speakers Corner in Hyde Park.

That said, there would be something deeply frightening and inefficient about a world where AOL-owned Hyde Park and its orators could only speak about Microsoft products in language carefully scripted to avoid copyright infringements written into English. Unfortunately, the Internet is heading that way, and Lessig has done a great service in pointing to a few ways out.

NICHOLAS THOMPSON *is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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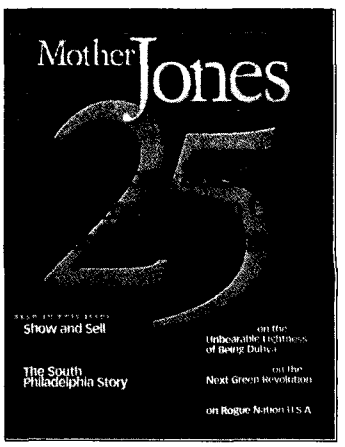

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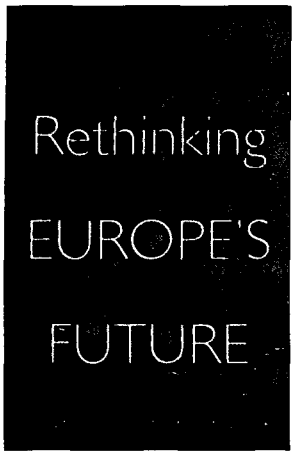

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David P. Calleo

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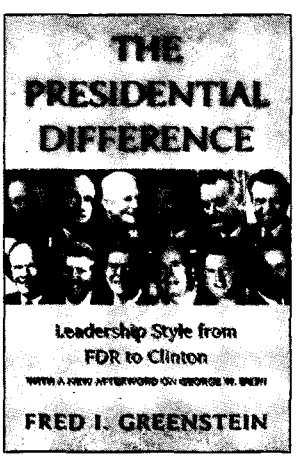

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